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THE

MYRTLE AND THE HEATHER

A TALE

BY A. M. GOODRICH

AUTHOR OF 'GWEN' 'CLAUDIA'
ETC

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

LONDON
JOHN W. PARKER AND SON WEST STRAND
1857

[*The Author reserves the right of Translation*]

249. g. 614.

LONDON:
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS, CHANDOS STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

TO

THE LADY CAROLINE LEGGE,

THIS TALE

IS INSCRIBED,

WITH SENTIMENTS OF ESTEEM AND REGARD,

BY

A. M. G.

THE

MYRTLE AND THE HEATHER.

CHAPTER I.

Fast life's sands are going,
Sparkling as they run,
And for ever showing
That ere set of sun,
Much he hath to do, and much to be undone.

Love on earth that grieveth,
Tears of pain and shame,
God in Heaven receiveth,
Covering it from blame,
With the enfolding mantle of the Almighty Name.

THE BAPTISTERY.

ONE of the mild and lovely days of a Neapolitan winter was drawing to its close. In the highest chamber of a lodging-house on the Chiaja lay a young man stretched on his bed, opposite to a window which commanded a full view of the bay. The invalid was very restless; it was the hour at which he became so; daily at sunset did the fever return, which was fast consuming his vitality; a fact perceptible to the few who watched the hectic glow on his cheek, and the fire in his eye. He surveyed the gorgeous scene before him,

but not with any appearance of the interest and admiration it was qualified to inspire; he was impatient to see the hues of glory fade away. The chief object of his attention was a child of nine years old, seated in the recess of the window, and wholly absorbed in the spectacle before her.

While the first glance at the dying man pronounced him to be an Englishman, with much of English beauty even now discernible on his high brow, aquiline nose, and in his sunken blue eye, the child on whom he gazed too fondly for her to be other than his own, had every characteristic of an Italian. Her features were strikingly symmetrical, her clear skin was tinged with the richest dye; her dark hair, glistening in the sunshine like threads of gold, was bound round her slight head in profuse braids. With parted lips, and attitude and look of deep devotion, she sat watching the beauties of the sky rapidly varying before her sight. A painter might well have seized the rapturous expression of her countenance to denote the childish meditations of one destined in after life to be singularly visited of God. Her father regarded her in silence with a reverent love; tears gathered in his eyes; he covered them with his thin, clasped fingers; a stifled sob filled his throat; the sound caught the quick ear of his little nurse, and darting down from her seat, she was at his side.

'Dearest father!' she said, kneeling by him.

'You were rejoicing in the beauty of the evening, my child. The glorious spectacle is almost over now. Spare me the few moments for which you would have lingered still—'

'Oh, father, were you in want of anything, yet failed to call me?' asked the girl, reproachfully.

'I do wish to have a few minutes' conversation with you, before your grandfather returns, Beatrice. I have often deferred it, but I would not let this opportunity pass.' There was a feverish disquietude in his manner. 'You love your grandfather, my child?' he continued, drawing her towards him, and pressing her convulsively to his bosom.

'Yes,' replied the girl, as Cordelia might have uttered the word.

'You must cherish him when I am gone.'

Beatrice was accustomed to hear her father speak of departure, and yet to bridle all emotion.

'Bring me your Bible—quick!'

She had not far to seek.

'Can you find the parable of the Prodigal Son?' he said, turning over the leaves with trembling fingers. The girl opened them at once at the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke.

'Read it to me.'

Beatrice obeyed. Her father, while she read, threw himself back on his pillow; tears ran down his cheek in silence, then groans escaped his labouring breast. The child on her knees, her clasped hands on her book, gazed on him earnestly, but without comprehending the meaning of the scene. He raised himself, placed his finger on the page, and with tremulous energy, he said—

'Beatrice, remember in future never to read that parable without reflecting that such a prodigal was the wretched man who calls you his child; ay, and worse, for he left his father in plenty, and with a

more dutiful son to minister to him; but I have cost mine his hearth and his home,—exiled him from his native land. Remember, also, that such a parent was mine. He has come into a distant country to seek his son; he has fallen on my neck, and supplies my necessities with his small remaining substance. And I—what can I do to make amends for the past, Beatrice? What have I, save one little ewe lamb, that lies in my bosom, to give him? Yes, my child, I entreat you, with this my latest breath, promise me to show towards him that dutifulness and that love which I can never express again but in words. Be to him in all things as nearly what I ought to have been, as the helplessness of your age and your sex will permit. Neither the one nor the other lessens your power to comfort and to gladden. When most we need consolation and hope, it is the woman and the child who can best bring them home to us. Of the trials and temptations of life you as yet know nothing; sorrows you believe there are, because you see the faces you love sorrowful.'

'Oh! father, sorrow I *feel*, because I see you suffer, and because I grieve with him when you say that the time draws near when you will be with us no more!'

The child sobbed; she had refrained from tears with that strange quietness which in the sick chamber she was accustomed to practise, but nature now would have its way. A bright and beautiful beam of hope broke over her father's countenance; he bent over her, and whispered in her ear:

'Weep not for me, for my earthly parent tells me that his love is but the feeble image of the love of

One on High; that my Heavenly Father will forgive, will welcome me even as he has forgiven and welcomed—'

The girl raised her head, saying, suddenly:

'The last night that we were at Lawley, when I was sad at the thought of going I knew not whither, my grandfather called me to him, and took me on his knee; his Bible lay open before him, his cheek was wet with tears when he kissed me. He said: 'My Beatrice must be glad, not sorrowful, for her father was lost and is found, and we go hence to meet him.' But I did not know—' She paused.

'The meaning I have this hour unfolded to you. He would conceal it in his fond and perfect forgiveness, but I declare it in order that you may promise me to make him all the amends in your power for the evil I have done.'

'I do promise,' replied Beatrice, solemnly, and she said no more. She looked at her father's flushed cheek and glittering eye, and did not dare to ask him, as her whole heart yearned to do, to speak to her of her mother. Must she never hear of her from his lips? The child smothered her passionate feelings, and sat motionless as a statue, till a feeble step was heard on the stairs.

'That he should have to mount here!' groaned her father. Beatrice sprang forward to throw open the outer door, and led in the old man (old and broken-down rather by present care than by years, for he was not more than fifty-five), refreshing his languor by her smile of welcome. He kissed her, approached his son, took his hand, and sighed deeply as he felt the burning heat of his skin.

'I am better, father—better than I have been for

many evenings,' cried his son, with that feeling of elation which an accomplished purpose excites.

'Are you, my boy?' and his eye glanced at the Bible. 'Has Beatrice been reading to you?'

'Yes—words of peace and joy.'

'That is well,' said his father; 'but, Gerald, you need repose.'

From that hour Gerald could less than ever bear that his father should be absent from his sight. It seemed as if the prodigal's hope of heaven grew dim when he did not see it reflected on the serene countenance of the parent who had come to seek him, and to lead him into paths of penitence and peace.

Five years before the period of which we have been speaking, on a clear frosty night in the Christmas season, when the moon, shining brightly down on the little village of Lawley and on the Grove, (an humble yet the most important residence it contained,) pierced through the leafless trees, chequered the ground with the shadow of every branch and stem, and slept more quietly on the turf bank and smooth lawn which lay round the house, in the shadow of the porch stood Gerald Courtenay, on the threshold of his father's home, uncrossed by him for many a day. A large cloak enveloped the young man's form; he shook himself free from it for a moment before putting his hand on the lock of the door, in order that he might look on the burden which lay concealed from view, and protected from cold beneath it. The face of a sleeping child met his gaze.

'How pure, how serene are yon silver moon, and thy blessed face, my darling!' he exclaimed. 'They

cannot cast thee out. All here looks in unison with thee, and proclaims me an alien.' His young and handsome features appeared haggard in the bright rays which fell upon them. He struck on the door with his hand: 'I would not summon the servant if I could gain admission otherwise,' he thought.

He heard a low growl within. He struck again. A step he knew, but slower, feebler than it was of yore, approached. The door opened, a dog bounded forth.

'Down, Pompey, down!' cried his master. The dog had seized a piece of the stranger's cloak, but the wearer of it let fall his hand on the head of the animal, who immediately relinquished his hold to lick it, and to fawn upon him. This arrested the attention of his master, but no time for speculation was allowed.

'Father,' said the stranger, in the deep hoarse voice of emotion, 'shall I enter?'

'My son!' cried the elder Courtenay, and led him in. The little hall was crossed almost at a step; the door of the sitting-room was open, and in front of the cheerful fire stood a lady, who had been disturbed by Gerald's knock, desirous to know by whom the interruption had been given which had called forth her husband and Pompey. A cat, stretching itself, shared the rug with her.

'It is my son! it is Gerald!' exclaimed Courtenay, joyfully.

The countenance of his wife reflected all the surprise and none of the pleasure which beamed on his own.

She was not Gerald's mother.

CHAPTER II.

> The tear down childhood's cheek that flows,
> Is like the dewdrop on the rose.
>
> WALTER SCOTT.

'I DO not come alone,' said Gerald, slightly resisting his father's fond attempt to unfasten his cloak; then casting the garment from him, he laid the child which slept beneath it on the sofa, the seat which Mrs. Courtenay had occupied. Pompey began to examine the little girl closely, smelling her dress, and finally licking her hands and arms. Courtenay gazed down on her as only those who enshrine children in their inmost hearts do gaze, and laid his hand on his son's arm. Mrs. Courtenay stood erect, in increasing astonishment.

'She is mine!' exclaimed Gerald, passionately, 'utterly unworthy as I am of her or of the sainted creature who bore her. She is mine! all I have left of the best, the most beautiful and beloved. She is mine! and I resolved that I would lay her once on your bosom, father, hear her call you by your name, see her little hand caress you; and then you may repulse us both from your home and heart, if you will!'

The child awoke, and, startled by the blazing light, the various forms, and above all by the huge dog at her side, uttered a cry of terror. Gerald snatched her up to reassure her by his kisses and his words, which were uttered in a foreign tongue. At the sound of them, Mrs. Courtenay gave a slight gesture of horror. The child left off crying, and nestled close to her father's bosom; then at length, in obedience to his whispers, still averting and concealing her face, held out her little hand, and imperfectly uttered the word 'Grandpapa.' Courtenay threw his arms round them both, and they wept aloud. Mrs. Courtenay, full as her heart was of doubt, could not refrain from mingling her tears with those of the father and the son; and at length receiving the little stranger into her charge, bore her to the chamber of an old servant, Dorcas, more motherly than herself, and fonder far of Master Gerald, scapegrace as he was. Here the child sank again to sleep, holding fast by her father's hand—a measure which it was necessary to resort to before any prospect of peace could be enjoyed. Disengaging himself gently from her grasp, kissing her crimsoned cheek, Gerald returned to the seat and the repast which his father had meanwhile prepared for him. It was with a sensation of exquisite delight that he found himself at the fireside which in other lands had often crossed his memory, an image of quiet comfort, rather than of the monotonous dulness which he had refused to tolerate. To his father's patient ear he told the history of the interval which had elapsed since last he sat there.

Gerald permitted himself to pass over the fact

that since the fear of being arrested for debt had driven him from his native land, instead of turning with energy to any honest course of exertion, he had lived on the Continent on means derived from uncertain and little creditable sources, sometimes with prodigality, sometimes with penury. He went on to relate how he had become acquainted with a Neapolitan actor, who was acting the liveliest parts of comedy with exquisite humour, while a mortal disease was preying hourly on him; and this for the sake of an only child—a daughter whom he guarded with the most jealous affection, scarcely letting the sun shine on her, and rushing from the theatre to the top of one of the half-ruined palaces of his native city (the former abodes of princes), to see whether his treasure was safe as he had left it. His last object in life was to secure a small *dote* for his Beatrice, wherewith to place her in a convent. The young Englishman, observing the peculiarities of his behaviour, tracked him to his home, moved by motives of benevolence. There he beheld the beautiful girl the uncertainty of whose fate agonised her parent's breast. There he wooed and won her, wringing a somewhat reluctant assent to their marriage from a parent who, dying himself, allowed his daughter to choose between the convent and the suitor who had possessed himself of her love and of her confidence, unmolested by misgivings. Of the purity and excellence of Beatrice, Gerald spoke in accents which enforced belief.

'The only treasure I ever won!—the only real happiness I have tasted since I left England! And now it is past. She was too good to continue mine.

Her child is too good to be in my keeping. Father —will you take her into yours? I must be gone with the dawn.'

Courtenay's sole reply was a mute pressure of his son's hand, and he left him to seek his wife. Gerald continued to gaze in gloomy abstraction on the fire; in a few minutes an uneasy slumber closed his eyes.

Mrs. Courtenay, meanwhile, before she retired to her own chamber, had time closely to scrutinize the child. Dorcas, unfastening her white frock that she might rest more comfortably, had drawn from the little creature's bosom a cross, hanging to a chain of beads. Though unaccustomed to such sights, Mrs. Courtenay nevertheless pronounced this to be a rosary.

'The child of a foreigner, and a papist, no doubt; one who thought her sins were washed away if she knelt at the feet of a priest, and then murmured as many prayers as he bid her count on these foolish beads, I suppose.'

This conclusion inclined Mrs. Courtenay to lend a favourable hearing to her husband, when, after relating to her what he believed to be the infant's true history, he paused, and, with a pale and earnest countenance, asked:

'Sarah, will you receive my grandchild as your own?'

'It is a most lovely babe!' had been Dorcas's oft-repeated exclamation; but this Mrs. Courtenay condemned as weakness.

'She will never have a Christian training if we give her back into Gerald's hands. She has come out of worse than heathen darkness, and I dare not

refuse such a trust when committed to me. Fortunate for her that her poor mother is gone, and not less fortunate that her father yields her up.'

Such was Mrs. Courtenay's mode of considering the matter, and the result was this decree—'Let her stay. I shall do my duty by her.' The lady was subject to few misgivings as to her power to discern and to discharge her duty. Her patient husband returned to Gerald's side. He started with grief and horror as he beheld the haggard features of his son; then seated himself near, bent down his head on his hands, tightly pressing his aching temples, and mutely prayed. Sleep never closed his eyes, till the grey light of dawn made Gerald look more ghastly than ever.

'Shall I rouse him?' he reluctantly deliberated; but the sleeper started up, and gazed wildly round, till his eye fell on his father.

'And you have been watching?' he exclaimed, with half-reproachful accents.

'And praying,' was Courtenay's solemn reply, as he placed his hand on his son's head.

Not a word of more direct counsel or entreaty passed his lips. Gerald's looks sank abashed before his father's steadfast eye.

The sun had risen above the hill, and Gerald was gone. He had not dared even to approach the couch of his sleeping infant. He looked back from the furthest spot whence he could discern the curling smoke ascending from the Grove, and said:

'She is safe. And I—have I broken the last link which bound me to Beatrice and to virtue?'

The child awoke to ask for her father, with a

passion of grief which, even at this early age, seemed to distinguish her from an English child. She reiterated without intermission, at first with a rapidity which amazed her hearers, then with a slower pathos which wrung their hearts,—'Papa —papa—papa.' This was the only word she would utter; and although Gerald had declared that he had familiarised her with the sound of English, she gave no present indication that she understood or heeded anything addressed to her. At length she sank utterly exhausted, only to repeat the same violence when refreshed by sleep and food. Her grandfather was the sole person who possessed any power of soothing her. Mrs. Courtenay, by turns, was disposed to repent of her acceptance of the wayward charge, or, reflecting on the manifest ill-training the child had already received, to dwell with satisfaction on the triumph of subduing such a temper. And she did subdue it; though not for several days was little Beatrice pacified. Her health was endangered by her excessive emotion, which, however, gradually subsided, and a fondness for her grandfather and for Pompey developed itself, which bid fair to restore her to happiness. But from the first there appeared to exist some antipathy between her and Mrs. Courtenay's cat.

CHAPTER III.

The winning guileless fantasies
Of little children round our feet;
The thoughts of age by suffering wise,
Listening to sounds by distance sweet;—
And things divine that hidden lie
In silver shrines of poesy;
Glad meetings after tearful woes,
  Like dews of night with rays of morn,
  And all the joys of suffering born.

THOUGHTS IN PAST YEARS.

SUCCESSIVE years were passed by Beatrice in the seclusion of the Grove. Her grandfather, the chief object of her affection, lived almost wholly in his library, surrounded by books to which he was constantly referring, and which accumulated around him till not a seat was left unoccupied by them, and Mrs. Courtenay was effectually discouraged from attempting to enter the apartment.

The only thing that was known to ruffle Courtenay's temper was, the endeavour of Dorcas to set his books in order. The misdemeanour of the cat, in upsetting the ink-bottle over some manuscript sheets laboriously compiled, and of which no notes were preserved, he met as a misfortune which called for the exertion of the higher Christian virtues, and emulated Sir Isaac Newton's heroic forgiveness of

his dog. But love of his books, of his writings, was not the sole passion of Reginald Courtenay's heart, than which a warmer, a tenderer, never existed. Often did he lean back in his chair, close his eyes, and appear lost in thought, till a tear quietly stealing through the eyelashes betrayed that the heart, not the brain, was at work. His musings were of his son—the wanderer. He was contemplating the time when a certain erudite composition should be completed, should have won the world's notice, and the reward which it might honestly demand; and thus he should be enabled to recal that exile to his native land, to place him in a position more favourable than any he had yet occupied, to wipe away dishonour from his name. At these (nay, at all) hours, the sight of the little Beatrice was delightful to him, as quietly she would make her way through all obstructions, to seat herself on a folio at his side, with a child's quickness of perception that, if she would retain the post, she must not be troublesome. Some very attractive volumes became, as it were, her own;—red-leaved quartos, which contained the *Legends of the Red Crosse Knight*, of *Sir Guyon*, and the other books of the *Faerie Queene*, illustrated with engravings which folded in the centre, and required to be turned over with much care. It was a pretty trait of truthfulness in the child which occurred in connexion with them. One day, proceeding too hastily, she made a terrible fracture through Pride's procession, and separated that evil guide, Idlenesse, from the car. There she sat patiently waiting to attract her grandfather's attention, resolved not to

go on until she had revealed the mischief she had been guilty of. Once or twice she pulled his coat; once or twice she touched his hand. 'Stay, my dear!' was all she gained from him; and stay she did, in wonderful patience and silence, for a time to her incalculable; tormented, too, as she was by a fervent desire to arrive at a picture she especially loved (a desire which had probably occasioned her over-haste) of Sir Guyon, watched over by his guardian angel.

Courtenay dearly loved his grandchild. He often, though not now, found leisure to attend to her, and would suit his discourse to her capacity, charming her by many a tale, or by the explanation of these her favourite prints. It had happened that, one day when explaining that of Sir Guyon, as he pointed to the angel seated by the outstretched figure of the knight, and told her that in weakness and weariness there are such bright beings watching round us, unseen by human eyes, but not the less present, he spoke of the father whom he was especially careful to keep fresh in the child's remembrance. 'He is travelling far away, but not without his guardian,' he said, with a sigh. In the faithful Palmer, the fond parent beheld himself, and trusted that a day would soon come when his son would be consigned to his care.

Thus was the picture endeared to Beatrice, and she would sit and muse over it, with musings too deep for childhood to explain, but the existence of which is frequently testified by its thoughtful mien. Now she felt as if it were forbidden to her to proceed until she had confessed her fault, and she could

not gain a hearing. Tea-time arrived. Mrs. Courtenay opened the door, and called her; stupefied by her long waiting, and her perplexity and distress, she did not attempt to obey. Mrs. Courtenay made her way towards her, and took her by the arm. The child still clung to the book, and the fracture consequently became greater.

'See what you have done,' said Mrs. Courtenay.

'I had done it already,' sobbed Beatrice; 'and I wanted grandpapa to see it.'

'I forbid you to have the book again for a week,' was Mrs. Courtenay's stern rejoinder, as she bore it away to paste and repair the injury. Nor was this all. Days afterwards, when Mr. Courtenay was sufficiently disengaged to attend to his darling, he took the volume from the shelf.

'Not that book,' whispered Beatrice, in a tone of awe.

'What! is it not your favourite?'

'Oh, yes! but not till next week.'

'Why not, my child?' asked Courtenay, looking in the troubled little face.

'Grandmama said not till next week, because I tore it.'

'Tore it! Why did you not tell me, Beatrice?' said her grandfather, thinking that he should have passed a more lenient sentence, had the confession been made to him.

'I did, but you did not hear me.'

Courtenay replaced the book on the shelf, and took down *Bewick* instead. It was his habit to acquiesce in his wife's decisions.

So much for the conscientiousness of Beatrice at

seven years old. Surely, if this were the produce of Mrs. Courtenay's training, there cannot be much objection to it, although it has not been placed in a very pleasing guise to the reader as yet. But might it be fairly claimed as its natural and proper result? Certainly not; even though it be allowed that her principles were not wholly erroneous, nor her system wholly ill directed, and that, even in their most mischievous features, they were far less injurious to the little gentle girl than they had proved to the rebellious Gerald, who in early life had been equally subjected to their rule and governance. It was part of her code to banish from his home everything attractive to his age, and enjoyments which those who should have been his companions were indulged in, he frequently heard stigmatized as sinful. The chosen friends gathered round the family hearth were such as could scarcely be otherwise than repulsive to youth. Gerald, possessed of a keen sense of the ridiculous, soon laughed at their absurdities; clear-sighted, clever, and wanting in reverence, as he grew older he suspected and convicted them of false pretensions. His father he loved from first to last, esteeming him only too good, too guileless, too indulgent for this world. Escaped from his ungenial home, where he had been subjected to a number of galling and unmeaning restrictions — denied the opportunity of learning self-control practically, and destitute of a necessary acquaintance with life and manners—in his college career he felt that he could not rush far enough into extremes of riot to indemnify himself for past constraint, nor seek companions too unlike those he had been obliged to endure.

Ruin overtook him, and, by his means, his father, a man of slender fortune, though of high birth. The one fled the country; the other resigned the home he had occupied in a town which afforded Mrs. Courtenay every facility for drawing round her a society after her own heart. To her credit be it said, that she yielded without a murmur everything that was required of her, and removed with her husband to an unpretending abode in a retired village, where Courtenay justified to himself his absorbing devotion to his books, under the plea that it was finally to be the source of wealth. To this home, after years of absence and long periods of total silence, Gerald brought his child, drawn thither by the cords of love, and by an earnest yearning to lay his infant on his father's bosom. But his ideas of right and wrong were greatly perplexed; he shrank from Mrs. Courtenay with the same personal repugnance as ever, yet was conscious that he had incurred so much misery and guilt in setting all her lessons at nought, that he no longer dared pronounce them worthless, but was content that his little Beatrice should learn them, and hoped that to her they would prove less distasteful than they had to him. Fortunately for the little orphan, in the home to which she was consigned, she found the kind Dorcas, and became the object of her grandfather's utmost tenderness. Mrs. Courtenay, too, loved the child, though she could scarcely win her love in return; she did not, however, recognise the difference there was in the very tone and look of Beatrice when brought within her sphere, but pronounced her 'a good,

quiet girl, considering—wonderful indeed that she should be Gerald's daughter.'

In fact, happily for Beatrice, she was in disposition, as in beauty, the very reflex of that young Italian mother, whom Mrs. Courtenay thought it right never to mention.

Mrs. Courtenay died when Beatrice was nine years old; many said that she was an inestimable woman, and that Mr. Courtenay would be lost without her. He dreaded as much himself; but, as it proved, he, and his little grandchild, and Dorcas went on with no other difference than a diffusion of increased peace around them, which they enjoyed without inquiring whence it came. It was not designed to be of long duration.

A letter arrived from Naples, and from Gerald, who having written with tolerable frequency at first to gather tidings of his child, gradually sank into silence; it came in the autumn of the year, and was composed under the influence of deep despondency.

'I have ruptured a blood-vessel. I shall die as my mother died. It is in vain that they speak to me of hope founded on the genial climate in which I happen to be.' (Mr. Courtenay groaned: 'Always that miserable reference of everything to chance—the gambler's habit!') 'No winter of late has passed without my suffering from a cough, one attack of which seems now enough to break the thread on which my life is hanging. Oh! father, forgive me! deny me not one line to assure me that you do. If I die sooner than I anticipate, and therefore unanswered, my last thought of you shall be your look of love when I stood at your door, and you

drew me in. Oh! that I had abided at your hearth! but it was not possible! all power of retracing my steps was denied me, almost from the beginning of my mad career. Is this a token of the wrath of Heaven?

'Write to me, father, and tell me if my child has been allowed to cherish any love for me?'

Mr. Courtenay knew whence this implied doubt arose, and he sighed; yet in this sigh there mingled somewhat of a sense of relief. His path lay plain before him, and no hand was stretched out to check his steps. He let the letter fall, bent down his face on his hands; at last he raised it bathed with tears, and said: 'I shall be with him soon!'

Beatrice stood at her grandfather's side, motionless and pale. She had seen him weep before for his wife, but she could not tell why he should weep now; she was sure that his grief was in some way the consequence of the letter, which he had received with trepidation. Instead of trying to conceal his emotion, he caught her in his arms, placed her in his lap, and cried:

'Here is a letter from your father, my darling. He wants to know if his little Beatrice loves him.'

The child nestled closer to her grandfather's bosom, and whispered: 'Tell him—so much!'

The words seemed to come from her inmost heart. In fact, there had been for months impressed on the child's memory a mysterious speech from Mrs. Courtenay's lips, not meant to reach her ear: 'Utterly forgetful of his child—no love, no gratitude!'

These expressions had sunk deep, contrasting as

they did with the affection, reverential as a child's ought to be, which her grandfather daily instilled into Beatrice.

Courtenay was impressed—somewhat alarmed—by the child's earnestness, and thought how he could suggest to her mind pleasurable images. He kissed her affectionately, saying: 'Think of Sir Guyon, and of his guardian angel, Beatrice. We will go hence, and join your father; we will cheer and nurse him, will we not?'

'Oh, yes! but when?'

'At once—as soon as possible.'

Before Christmas, Courtenay reached Naples. He found Gerald unmistakeably dying. He ministered to him day and night—parent, friend, nurse, in one. The deep delight with which Gerald beheld his father and his child at his side was unspeakable. Almost his first welcome of Beatrice was an ecstatic declaration of her resemblance to her mother.

'That angel face!' he exclaimed; 'I see it again before me!'

These few words kindled into a flame the interest in her mother which Beatrice treasured up in her bosom. The child hungered and thirsted for information concerning her. At the Grove, her father's name had rarely passed Mrs. Courtenay's rigid lips, her mother's never; and Beatrice entertained a sort of fear and awe which restrained her from all interrogations. Now she yearned to hear her father speak, yet still spoke not herself. At nine years old, Beatrice in many points outstripped her age: she had already felt deeply; within the few last weeks, had considered, even acted, for other persons;

in the chamber of sickness, had learned to keep under her own feelings, and in its silence had gone over and over again in her mind, questions and speculations which she could not communicate. Her patient, unconscious self-denial at length had its reward. After the conversation which we have repeated, her father having, by the appeal he made to her, relieved his mind of its chief burden, was willing to turn to other subjects of interest as deep, but not equally pressed on him by compunction. Gerald had, in truth, less to reproach himself with in his conduct to his young wife, than to any other person to whom he had been an object of affection. He had loved her from the first hour to the last; he had bewailed her loss passionately; yet, pure as she was, affection for her had not purified him; dear as she was, grief for her had not reclaimed him. Purification, repentance, can only proceed from a higher, holier influence than human love or human sorrow; —an influence now at work in Gerald's heart. As the hope gradually dawned on him that he, too, might possibly be admitted into those regions of peace where he believed his Beatrice to dwell—that he might again behold her face looking on him with all the kindness and far more than the happiness he had seen on it on earth, by degrees he loved to speak of her to his father and to her child. The subject became of constant recurrence. In the pensiveness of evening—in the stillness of night, when they often waked and watched together—in the early dawn, when the bay lay sparkling before them, and Courtenay, with look of reverent joy, would speak of the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing on His

wings, (and the wounded spirit of Gerald experienced the blessed effects of the balm which dropped from them)—the memory of the one who was gone before, mingled sweetly with their musings. In dreams and waking visions, sounds of peace and words of pardon thrilled on Gerald's ear; the depth of his humility, the fervency of his contrition, encouraged his father to 'hope all things,' and rendered him not afraid to breathe his hopes aloud.

To the unspeakable comfort of Courtenay, the faithful ministerings of the Church of England were not wanting to him and to his children, on this foreign strand. In addition to the kind and gentle clergyman resident in Naples, there came one of the name of Edward Herbert, brought thither by the same malady which was destroying Gerald, and had incapacitated him for the discharge of his home duties, between whom and the elder Courtenay some previous acquaintance had existed, and was now accidentally renewed.

Herbert no sooner learned the cause which led his countryman to Naples, than he felt desirous to share in some measure his task. He made the suggestion with so much delicacy, that it could not fail to be acceptable to Courtenay, who had some difficulty in rendering it equally so to his son. But all unwillingness was dissipated by the first smile of Herbert's benign face, by the first touch of his kindly hand. Gerald started when he saw a man no older than himself standing at his bedside, detected the same consuming fire, though burning as yet more slowly, in the deep-set eye, and heard the same cough, in less violence.

'You must not come here,' he said, in a hollow voice. 'Don't think me ungracious for finding that out the first time you honour me with a visit; but for you to undergo the exertion of mounting to this height for me—it is out of the question. You must surely possess friends who have a right to require better treatment of yourself, even if you are careless of danger.'

'None,' replied Edward Herbert, now regaining breath, 'who would deprive me of the inexpressible relief it affords me to escape a little from enforced idleness—to find myself doing something, that something being quite insufficient to alarm any one.'

From that day Herbert's visits were welcomed by all; the expressive looks of the little silent Beatrice were perhaps to him the most eloquent thanks which he received. It was easily arranged that he should be carried up the stairs in a sort of chaise à porteurs, as if he were mounting Vesuvius, he said with a smile; 'a precaution which renders my visits beneficial rather than injurious to me.'

CHAPTER IV.

> It is a precious sight, which angels view
> In trembling joy and hope . . .
> THE BAPTISTERY.
>
> And this is pity such as dwells above.
> *Ibid.*

BEAUTIFUL, most beautiful, was the scene in that little upper chamber on the day which proved to be the closing one of Gerald Courtenay's life:—

> Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
> The bridal of the earth and sky!

Meet day whereon to think and speak of 'Blessings'

> More plentiful than hope.

Beyond the couch of the dying man knelt his father, Edward Herbert, and the calm sister who had left her home to be with him, to minister to him in all hours of languor and of pain, and faithfully to record for those fond hearts forced to endure the solicitudes of absence, the alternations of his state. The resident English clergyman of Naples was there to administer to these few sheep in the wilderness whom it was his office to gather together, and to tend, 'to feed with a faithful and true heart, and to

rule prudently with all his power,' the Holy Sacrament entrusted to his keeping.

Beside her father's pillow was Beatrice, not excluded from a scene so well calculated to impress her mind with convictions, and to kindle feelings in her heart, which should influence both through their whole earthly course. The gorgeous light of day burst in upon them; and the beauties of the visible creation which they knew to be around them, brought Heaven nearer, though their conscious thoughts were solely of the higher glories and wonders of hidden grace. Sweet to their attentive ears were the last words of the Gospel: 'But is passed from death unto life.' Beatrice watched the expression of her father's upturned eye, then buried her face in his pillow.

And now all is concluded. The hymn of praise, the word of blessing have died away. The chamber is still, the penitent is solitary; he had asked to commune for a while with his own heart, with his God alone. And his father and Beatrice, where were they? They sat on the sea-shore, the waves quietly rippling to their feet, soothing them by soft repeated murmurs. Silent, thankful—nay, even joyful were their hearts. Beatrice first proposed to return; her grandfather acquiesced. They came not too soon. Gerald's face was serene, his smile welcomed them, but each perceived that an hour had done the work of days since they quitted him. Death was close at hand. This Courtenay knew, and Beatrice felt, without knowing; she had never yet seen the near approach of the king of terrors; an undefined awe seized her at his presence.

'Oh! my father, kindest father, bless me once more ere I go hence and am no more seen!'

'Bless thee, my boy—God bless thee, and take thee to Himself!'

'Beatrice—never—forget—'no more worthy to —be called—thy son.' Gerald's breathing grew every moment more difficult.

'Never!' replied Beatrice, twining her hands together in agony. 'But, oh! bless me too! do not go without blessing me!—and tell my mother how I love her!'

She bowed down her head, and burst into an uncontrollable flood of tears.

Gerald took his father's hand, and laid it with his own on Beatrice's head:

'Heaven guard and guide thee, my precious one!'

Courtenay would have led the child away to regain composure.

'Let me stay!' she implored: 'I will not disturb him.'

The starry heavens were spread like a pall bedecked with diamonds. Courtenay and his grandchild looked down on the face of the dead; it was placid and beautiful. Both the man stricken with affliction and with years, and the girl who stood yet on the threshold of life, yearned to partake of a like placidity. Beatrice started as her grandfather broke the awful silence.

'O tarry thou the Lord's leisure, be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart, and put thou thy trust in the Lord.'

Edward Herbert was dissuaded from reading over the remains of Gerald the words with which the

Church lays her children to rest from the toils, the troubles, and the temptations of this present world, but he would not be dissuaded from being present at the funeral. Compassion thrilled his heart as he looked on the forms of Courtenay and his grandchild bending low under the burden of affliction which for the time seemeth grievous; nor could he suppress a pang of like emotion for the meek companion at his side, as he listened with a conviction that the same sentences now uttered would ere long be repeated for himself. But as he heaved the sigh of natural feeling, he beheld a light of exceeding peace and joy illumine the usually pale, subdued countenance of his sister, as the words 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Even so, saith the Spirit'—were pronounced. He was comforted, reinvigorated, and murmured to himself with a full assurance, 'Thy God will send forth strength for thee.'

At the close of an evening walk with her brother, Serena Herbert paused at the gate of the Palazzo in which the Courtenays dwelt.

'I would go to that dear child — motherless, sisterless; surely, Edward, I may be something to her!'

'Go, dearest,' replied her brother, gently pressing her hand as she left him.

The door at which she knocked was opened by Courtenay himself.

'Miss Herbert,' he said, 'you are come to my child!'

Serena could not doubt that she was welcome. She entered softly. Beatrice was lying on her bed, on her face, suffocating, strangling every sob, lest

she should grieve her grandfather; he shrank back, and left Serena alone with her.

Serena seated herself beside the young girl,—she cast her arm across her:

'My poor Beatrice!'

The spell was broken. Beatrice half rose, cast herself on the compassionate bosom which waited to receive her, and gave vent to a storm of grief so wild and violent that it alarmed Serena, who yet was resolved, if possible, to let it exhaust itself without contention. All the vehemence of her Italian nature possessed Beatrice in this, as in some other hours of her existence; giving her emotions a force which it seemed to surpass the strength of childhood to combat. At length she lay quiet in Serena's arms, almost too weak to speak, yet apparently not without that sense of absolute enjoyment which enlivens the feeble hours succeeding to acute pain. Serena bent down to kiss the girl's lips, as, gently withdrawing her arms, she let her sink on the couch, she hoped to sleep.

'One moment,' whispered Beatrice. 'Has all this been wrong? would Mr. Herbert say so? I feel that I should like to thank God—it has done me so much good.'

'No, no; not wrong. The God who made us, gave us tears; we may thank Him for His gift. Good night, Beatrice.' And Serena stole away.

CHAPTER V.

If thou hast loved in hours of gloom
To dream the dead are near,
And people all the lonely room
With guardian spirits dear,

Dream on the soothing dream at will:
The lurid mist is o'er,
That show'd the righteous suffering still
Upon the eternal shore.

CHRISTIAN YEAR.

THE Herberts had, for Gerald Courtenay's sake, tarried in Naples longer than they had intended, and when his life came to a close they prepared for departure. Nothing contributed so much to revive Beatrice after her sorrow, as the belief that she could afford any assistance to her friends in the preparation for their removal. When they were gone, what was to become of her grandfather and herself? On this point Beatrice speculated little; yet their present mode of life was undoubtedly cheerless and monotonous. Courtenay had taken to his books again. Beatrice sat in silence, usually in the window, gazing on all her father had gazed on, thinking of him and of her mother, longing to be with them; yet, mindful of the promise she had made concerning her grandfather, the desire was not

entertained without self-reproach, and she asked, with timid apology, 'would he really miss me?'

She did not doubt that his heart was full of love for her; but she little guessed how he racked his brain with thought, nor how he pressed inward the cares which harassed him, that she might not be vexed. He was so bent on averting future evil from her, as for this very cause scarcely to mark the present, though betrayed by her pale, thin cheek and altered appetite. At length, one day, he called her to him, as he had used to do when she was a little child (he quite forgot how time passed on), and said:

'My Beatrice, we are going to leave Naples. You must make yourself ready.'

Beatrice started; any prospect of change seemed to surprise her, but she could not distinguish whether she felt joy or sorrow.

'What!' she said, 'are we going back to the Grove?'

'No, Beatrice,' replied Mr. Courtenay, gravely. 'The Grove is no longer ours.'

'No longer ours!' repeated Beatrice; 'whose can it be? And Dorcas?'

'It belongs to strangers,' answered her grandfather; 'and Dorcas—she will serve them.'

This brief reply sounded strangely in the ears of Beatrice, but her grandfather proffered no further explanation. In fact, he had resolved that he would not yet tell Beatrice that he was as much an exile as Gerald had been; still less that for Gerald's sake he was so. He had not communicated even to Edward Herbert his determination to discharge his

son's debts to the full, but, unfortunately, had recourse to a friend of far less judgment in England, by whose aid he carried on the investigations which he wished to make, and in the course of them involved himself in liabilities beyond his expectations. And now even his present means of subsistence were exhausted: he roused himself to seek others, and, in despair of gaining immediate profit from writings which he continued to regard as the future source of wealth and fame, he listened eagerly to the suggestions of a bookseller (whom he had furnished with some translations, and who had found his erudition useful), that he should offer himself as English tutor to a Russian nobleman, seeking one for his sons, who would assuredly bestow a full remuneration on his services, and without difficulty include him and his grandchild in the princely suite. Courtenay knew almost as little of the world as Beatrice did, and, without more caution than she would have employed, closed with this arrangement. He must now, as he told her, prepare to start on an appointed day with the Prince Z—— for Rome and Florence.

The duties imposed on Courtenay in his novel post were not sufficient to engross his time, or thoughts. A residence in Rome revived all his classic lore, and he wandered frequently among the ruins, absorbed in researches of antiquarian interest, and mightily indifferent to more modern considerations. With the spring, the Prince passed on to Florence, where society of a different caste flocked around him, which still comprehended individuals by no means unacceptable to Courtenay; among them

was Oreste Gualandi, a painter of much good-nature and considerable ability, who was greatly charmed with the beauty of Beatrice.

'Come with me,' he one day said to them, taking the little girl's hand in his,—'come with me, and I will show you Beatrice's portrait. It will astonish you.' He led Courtenay on, not to his own studio, but through the gorgeous apartments of the Pitti Palace. So great was Courtenay's absence of mind, that he followed without displaying that astonishment on which Oreste had calculated; the Englishman's abstraction was a source of amusement to the lively Florentine. They moved forward till they reached the room in which hangs the beautiful picture of the Madonna della Seggiola; there Oreste stopped. 'I have a commission to copy this for the Signor Principe. See, my platform and easel are already placed; but as I began, it struck me that were the Signorina but a few years older, she might spare me the weariness of copying from the canvas, and I would produce from life something that should rival what we see here.'

So saying, he placed Beatrice on the platform, and looked from her to the picture with approving scrutiny.

'Is it not surprising? is it not admirable?' he exclaimed, and the exclamation was responded to on every side with Italian vivacity. The artists thronged around, expressing their delight and surprise in every variety of gesture and tone, yet the gravity of Courtenay and of his granddaughter was little discomposed. The former contemplated with satisfaction the remarkable likeness which Oreste

had pointed out, but the painter's ecstatic words sank deeper into Beatrice's heart, who drank them in with much attention. She well remembered how often her father had commented on her resemblance to her mother—that mother whom she had yearned to behold. 'This, then,' said she, inwardly, gazing on the lovely picture before her,—'this, then, is my mother!' and the face there portrayed was for evermore enshrined in Beatrice's memory.

Oreste became daily more fascinated by the sweetness, simplicity, and beauty of the little orphan. As he told his wife: 'There is a pathetic gravity in that child's face which I can't bear to see at her age. Now, little Maria's composure suits her well, you know; vowed as she is to white, it is beautiful to see her so calm and so sedate, in the world and not of it. But Beatrice—she looks too melancholy, and even at times too anxious, for childhood. We must get her here, Maddalena mia; Flavio, and Rosina, and even the good, dear Maria will enliven her, and make her another, and a happier child. Ah! I am bent on that measure. I shall bring them to my studio, to see how the Prince's picture progresses; moreover, I must paint her—I certainly must—such a heavenly face!

'You will love the grandfather, too. You will think of your own father, as we saw him last year at Leghorn. I understand women: they always find out some reason, some association, that makes them love the young and the old; and then I know, every one knows, there is not such a heart as thine, Maddalena, beating under heaven!'

Thus did Signor Oreste address his handsome,

benign-looking wife, who rewarded him by a sweet smile, which disclosed two rows of teeth as white as pearls.

'A strange household for them to form part of,' muttered Oreste to himself, as he went on preparing his palette. 'It is well that Beatrice is a mere child.'

Now, it had never occurred to Reginald Courtenay that it was a strange household of which he formed part, or that a breath of scandal was afloat concerning it. How long he might have maintained an ignorance for which he would have found few to give him credit, cannot be ascertained; the truth of the matter was revealed by an act of extreme caution on the part of the most guilty concerned in what might otherwise have remained a secret to him for ever. Such total blindness they could not believe in; they thought it admirably simulated, and that he who could assume it so well, must be quite keen-witted enough to claim an ample reward at some convenient season. They began to feel uneasy in living with one possessed of such a weapon, unless they could absolutely bind him over not to use it against them; and they proffered a bribe so considerable as to rouse Courtenay's suspicions. He would not accept the gift without fully ascertaining its meaning. Crime took off its mask, and Courtenay rose before it in all the dignity of rectitude; there followed one flash of indignant scorn, one bold rebuke, the sternest that had ever passed his lips. It was as if he woke up from a dream; but the reality of the brief scene was proved by the arrears of his salary lying before him, and he turned

away to consider where he and his little Beatrice should that night rest their heads.

'That painter and his wife—surely they are good and true. I never saw countenances more honest, more benevolent. And Beatrice, how happy she was yesterday evening with their children! I never knew her in such spirits in my life. I will ask him for advice.'

Courtenay hastened away to the Palazzo C——, and found Oreste at his easel. He explained his difficulties with considerable embarrassment, all the greater that Gualandi was painting for the Prince. Oreste shrugged his shoulders, and wondered whether the worthy student could be really so blind as he professed; at last, he came to the conclusion, which he afterwards communicated to his wife, that the honest man was as innocent as a babe. The painter, with all his apparent frankness and real goodness of heart, was a subtle Italian nevertheless. He did not intend to give offence to his patron by coming suddenly forward, but he did intend to serve Courtenay. He found him an apartment before night; but not till after the Prince Z——'s departure from Florence did he propose that he should occupy one under the same roof with himself, and let the little Beatrice have the full benefit of the cheerful society of his children;—almost the greatest boon that could be bestowed on her. The unfailing kindness of Oreste's nature made him thoughtful of all he knew even in the slightest degree. The beggar whom he had passed twice in the same locality would keep a place in his memory, and induce him to set aside some trifle as suitable

to no one else, but just such as Oreste would tell la buona Maddalena, could not fail to call up a twinkle in a roguish eye, and win the bestower the reward he relished, in the sly remark and pungent jest, which might be reckoned on from such a parasite. In the present instance, the painter and his wife made every necessary domestic arrangement for Courtenay and his grandchild, and, actuated by consideration for each party, secured for them the services of a woman in whose honesty and zeal for her employers they had perfect confidence, and whom they were very glad to furnish with occupation. She was a widow, who had followed her only child, a girl of twelve, a year since to the grave. She had idolized her Teresina, and for a long while went about like a creature bereft of her senses, unable to give her attention to any of the former concerns of her life. Maddalena had done all in her power to console poor Annunziata; she had met her with the sympathy which a mother alone could yield her. She had never lost a child, it is true, and Annunziata had been heard to assert that a woman never came to her feelings till she had; but Maddalena had watched through weary nights and days beside the little Maria, when the cloud of death seemed to have settled on her fresh childhood. In those hours of intense anxiety, she committed the sufferer to the care of the Mother pierced by many sorrows, with that fond superstition invented as a relief to parental agony, and thenceforward clad her in white raiment as part of her vow. The little maiden, enfeebled by her fearful malady, the smallpox, and bleached by it

nearly as white as the dress she wore, regained not the elasticity and liveliness of youth, but moved, a gentle shadow, about the house, with an influence over each inmate of it possessed by none else.

'Ah! but she was spared to you; and my Teresina, I have lost her!' replied Annunziata, shaking her head to all Maddalena's arguments and comparisons. 'E sai, mia buona signora, cosa ha detto il padre riverentissimo'—she began for the hundredth time; and Maddalena listened with her angelic patience, well aware that there was more comfort in the one little anecdote Annunziata was about to relate, than in all the considerations she could urge.

'When the child felt herself dying, she must confess with all speed, though Heaven knows there could not be a speck on her conscience, taking her, as I ever did, to mass, and confession, and holy communion, from the hour she was confirmed by our good archbishop here in the Duomo. I lost no time, you may believe me, in fetching Father Clement from the convent to her. She had been used to him from her birth, you know—no other had ever confessed her—and when not nine years old, so particular she was to omit nothing, that the good man would sometimes say to her—'Have you not done yet, my child?' He rose up and left his supper untouched; he was not the one to vex me with delay in such a moment as that. When we came to the chamber—'Mamma mia,' she said, 'go away, and shut the door.' I did as she bid me. I had served her night and day like a slave, and though she was gentleness itself, there was a tone

of authority in her voice now, I thought. I closed the door after me, sat down beside it, leaning my head against the wall, and I wept—oh! how I wept!—yet too quietly for her to hear me. Presently Padre Clemente came forth. I thought that he did not see me cowering there in my misery, for he made as if he would have passed speedily on; but I saw it was to hide the tears which were trickling down his face. I caught the good man by the robe, and cried—'Father, father, not one word of consolation?' He turned back, and a smile sweet as Heaven broke through his tears; he put his hand kindly on my shoulder, and said, 'Cara mia, non piangete, che avete un' angiola in casa!'* Those were his words, signora mia; indeed they were.' And throwing her apron over her face, Annunziata wept aloud.

Regardless of Maddalena's soothing speeches, she went on again as if without interruption.

'I answered—'But you, father, you weep. What, then, is there for me?' 'Hope and joy,' he replied; 'my tears are not of sorrow.'

'I left him then to go to her. Before midnight she died. Her last words were—'I see Jesus!—and now He sees me—yes, yes, He smiles!' and on her own wan lips came an answering smile, and with that she expired. How, then, am I to believe Fra Giovacchino, who comes to me so frequently, and tells me she is suffering still, and that if I have a mother's heart beating in this body, I must give yet and again money for masses for her soul?'

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* Dear friend, do not weep, for you have an angel in the house.

Anger and doubt were struggling on the woman's countenance with a fearful belief; they flashed from her dark eye, they quivered on her lip. The pious Maddalena shrank away from a perilous subject.

'Fear not, signora,' continued Annunziata, vehemently; 'I have given—I do give the food this flesh craves, for the repose of her dear spirit. I have left myself this only gown which is not rent, for I earn nothing now, and grow poorer and poorer. But the bitterest of all is, that I lay myself down at night thinking of the smile which Jesus bent on her, and then in the morning comes that Frate to tell me of flames and torments.'

Her tone was one of intense anguish, and Maddalena knew not how to soothe her; at last she thought of saying—

'But Father Clement, what does he say?'

'Oh! he speaks words of comfort and hope. But I can't deafen my ears to those of the other, for you know they are both priests alike. What can I believe?' And Annunziata swayed her body backwards and forwards in her grievous perplexity.

It was with the kind design of weaning this poor woman from her sorrow, that Oreste and his wife urged her to take the care of Beatrice and of her grandfather, the latter standing scarcely less in need of it than the former. To oblige her friends, Annunziata consented; she had been but a very short time about a child so lovely and so engaging as Beatrice, before she entered with her whole heart into her service. Astonished at the warmth of interest which she felt kindling within her, her imagination, in order to account for it, conjured up the idea that there existed

a marvellous resemblance between Beatrice and her lost child. On this belief she dwelt with rapture to Oreste and his wife; they never contradicted her, although Oreste shrugged his shoulders, when she departed, at the comparison between his favourite and her Teresina. But Maddalena laid her soft hand on his, and said—

'I feel what Annunziata means. You would smile at the thought of any likeness existing between our pale Maria and Beatrice; yet I sometimes perceive one, and I believe it to consist in something which is common to all devout children. It is the trace of Heaven still upon them; the freshness of baptismal dew is glistening yet, not parched up by the blast that blows across this desert world.'

CHAPTER VI.

To see a child so very fair,
It was a pure delight.
WORDSWORTH.

'MY good Oreste, pray tell me who it is that is singing in the garden?—not one of your children, I am sure, for I should have heard your ecstasies long since, had either of them possessed such a gift.'

'Well, signore, I must confess she is none of mine. She sings like an angel, it is true, and she is no less of an angel to look upon. You shall see her, and you must learn also that you and I possess an equal right to be proud of her. She is as much your compatriot as mine, and as much mine as yours: you know I love riddles. On my word, I believe that you would find yourself not a little at home with the old grandfather. His brain is so stuffed with learning, that it has not the smallest nook wherein to keep any little knowledge of ordinary things. He has filled his chamber with musty volumes, over which he pores all day, in order that he may compile another, which I doubt not will take in all the antiquarians, il Signor Oarde among them' (bowing slightly to his companion); 'and they will

pronounce it not a whit more modern than those he has consulted. Poor man! he has also another claim to your friendship, a strange one, not often allowed, but all-powerful with you, I believe—poverty!

'I can tell you, la buona Maddalena has more than once lengthened out our broth with water till the children have made wry faces, in order that we might call these strangers in to partake of it.'

'And is he an Englishman?'

'Certainly, and of high birth too. The girl's mother was Neapolitan, and, I believe, the daughter of a comedian—'

Oreste began to relate all the particulars of his new acquaintance which he had been able to glean from Courtenay or from Beatrice, both of whom he found far less communicative than he desired, for he was a man of singular curiosity.

Mr. Howard, his auditor, gave the utmost attention to the narrative of Oreste, and then remarked: 'Be they poor as you say, this girl's voice will prove a fortune in itself. Only hear her now, singing like a nightingale.'

'Yes, and wonderful pathos in the tone, is there not? It touches me to the heart. Until she came here, and was among my children, she scarcely sang at all—scarcely knew that she could sing. I don't believe that she was ever happy before: her old grandfather, who loves her passionately, esteems her his solitary treasure — of course he could not be a companion to her, like my little Rosina is.

'Ah! I should have made you acquainted with each other long ago, had you not passed all the summer at Lucca. Florence has been very dull

without you. I want fresh orders sadly. You must bring some rich milor here soon,—not a tiresome, ignorant creature, without an idea in his head, beyond those eternal, worthless copies of La Flora and La Fornarina, which we are constrained to manufacture—but one who will give wings (golden wings) to my own imagination. My Ugolino! only look upon it!'

The painter crossed his studio, removed the cloth from the largest canvas it contained, and displayed a picture of considerable force and merit—half finished only, because he received no encouragement to proceed.

'See,' he continued, pointing to the figure of the youngest son; 'he listens for some sound of succour from without, and his beating heart (the throbs of which are the only sound he hears) tells him he listens in vain. That is Flavio. I had recourse to the barbarous expedient of keeping him at home, when the girls, and Beatrice whom he adores, were all gone to the Cascine with the mother. Miserably plaintive it made him look, I assure you. And Ugolino—oh! he is myself—gnawing his hands in despair of ever receiving an order for any original.'

'Don't despair, my dear Oreste. I will procure you one. Now call that syren in.'

Oreste complied, and slyly watched the surprise and pleasure which Mr. Howard evinced, as the little girl, obedient to his call, entered the studio. She shrank back with a blush of timidity when she perceived a stranger there, and one whose attention was evidently directed to herself.

'Nonsense,' cried Flavio, a handsome, lively boy;

'don't pinch my fingers, Beatrice, and pull me away. I want to speak to the Signor Inglese. It is long since he has been here, and he is quite an amico di casa, and always kind to us. I know he will have brought us something from Lucca, if it be only nuts for the Carnival. Oh! such a beautiful mask as he gave me last year!'

'True, true, my friend Flavio,' cried Mr. Howard, in a benevolent tone, as he caught some portion of this speech; 'you shall find that you have not been forgotten. And this little stranger, surely she will make acquaintance with me? Why, she is my own countrywoman, I am told. Come nearer, and let us hold a discourse together of which this young impertinente shall not understand a syllable.'

'Nay, signore,' returned Flavio, nothing daunted, 'we are just breaking her of her English, for we wish her to belong altogether to us.'

The kindness of Mr. Howard's smile had reassured Beatrice, who now approached, and put her hand in his.

'Will you let them break you of your English?' he asked softly in his native tongue, stroking her dark brown hair as he spoke.

Beatrice looked up for a moment.

'They can never do that,' she replied, in a tone of extreme feeling.

'You have heart and brain enough to love and to comprehend both languages, I can see.'

'I speak English with my grandfather—'

'And with me,' interposed Mr. Howard, in the tone of established friendship.

'And Italian with them and with Annunziata,' continued Beatrice.

'That is as it should be.'

'She was a terrible little Neapolitan when she came here,' cried Flavio, unwilling to be silent.

'I had heard nothing else,' returned Beatrice, quietly.

There was a composure and even dignity in the child's manner, which struck Mr. Howard as remarkable.

'Do you love singing?' he inquired.

'Very much now.'

'What, did you not always love it?'

'I sang little till lately; at least, no one noticed it at home; and if I sang, I scarcely knew that I did myself—except sometimes.'

Beatrice stopped.

'At what times?'

'When I wanted not to cry.'

'What did you sing then, my child?'

'A song I heard the nuns sing one day in Rome, when my grandfather took me into a church on a hill while we were out walking.'

'Will you sing that now?'

Beatrice shrank away: 'Not now, thank you.'

'Well, sing me the song you were singing in the garden.'

'Oh, yes, that is one of Flavio's songs.' The child's face brightened with a vivacity which Mr. Howard had not supposed it capable of expressing, so pensive had it hitherto appeared. She immediately began to sing a playful and grace-

ful air, to which Oreste beat time with rapture, and Mr. Howard listened with evident approbation.

'I did not over-estimate the quality of her voice or ear one whit, I am sure, Oreste,' exclaimed Mr. Howard, as soon as the performance was finished. 'Now I must go; but remember, you are to bring the grandfather and me acquainted as soon as possible.'

There was never a more favourable occurrence for Courtenay and for his granddaughter than this acquaintance with Mr. Howard, which gradually ripened into friendship. This gentleman was one of the oldest English residents in Florence, and the truest patron which her sons of genius possessed. He was far from living as a man of wealth, was strictly frugal in all his personal expenses, remarkably careless of his own exterior, yet looking, however shabby, or even threadbare his garments, unequivocally aristocratic. He was sometimes discovered (for these were secrets sedulously guarded, and revealed only by the necessity which occasionally existed for co-operators,) to have performed acts of a princely generosity, besides the frequent lesser proofs of benevolence which abounded in his daily life.

Without evincing any impertinent curiosity as to the past, Mr. Howard acquainted himself with Courtenay's present circumstances sufficiently to learn how best to serve him, and gradually obtained for him engagements which he could conscientiously and efficiently fulfil. He also made him alive to the rare gift which Beatrice possessed, and with the

utmost delicacy took upon himself the due culture of it, setting it before her grandfather as a means of future support for the unprovided orphan.

No sooner was Beatrice herself taught to contemplate the musical genius which had afforded her a deep and secret delight, as a possible source of wealth, than her whole imagination fired with the idea that this was the instrument granted her by Providence, for the fulfilment of her father's last desire. By these means would she set her grandfather free from the trammels which bound him; of their existence she could not live unconscious, of their origin she was not as utterly unsuspicious as he who groaned under them would have had her. That they were worn with something of ignominy she guessed, and she resolved to strain every nerve to break them off. When Mr. Howard, therefore, spoke kindly to her of relieving her grandfather from the anxiety which lay on him as to future provision for herself, she silently contemplated an individual service to be first rendered to him, as far exceeding all other objects in importance. This purpose she cherished secretly during the first years of her education, nor did she ever formally disclose it till, in her seventeenth year, Mr. Howard placed before her the desirableness of quitting, ere long, her grandfather's tranquil home, and pursuing as her profession the art which she had acquired.

'I have already spoken with Mr. Courtenay on this point, Beatrice,' said her thoughtful friend. 'I consider you scarcely less my child than his, you know, and we can but consult together on all questions that concern your welfare.'

Beatrice changed colour; then answered, in her quiet voice (Mr. Howard thought it trembled)—

'What did my grandfather say?'

'He spoke of his sister, Mrs. Lewis Fane, as of one who would afford you a home in London, and bestow on you all the love and care of a mother. If she is as gentle and as kind as your grandfather, Beatrice, you will be happy with her.' (Beatrice turned a little aside.) 'All this is extremely valuable, but still you will want patronage—introductions—'

'I suppose so,' replied Beatrice, in a tone of dejection, realising, as she had never realised before, that she was going among strangers.

'I will find all that is wanting to ensure success; never fear. The chief elements of it must be, and are, in yourself; the subordinate will present themselves.'

'Is Aunt Mary willing to let me live with her?' asked Beatrice that evening, rather suddenly, when, raising her sad eyes, she found those of her grandfather fixed wistfully upon her.

'Little less willing than I to keep you,' replied Courtenay, with irrepressible fondness.

'Dearest grandfather, I must go,' Beatrice cried, then bent down her face, and hid it with her hands; she felt one of her grandfather's laid tenderly on her head,—she murmured again, 'I must go!' And he contradicted her not.

At length the girl looked up, and in a tone of deep feeling she continued:—

'I have never yet told you why I must go; but perhaps you know. It is to set you free—to do as

he would have me were he with us still. I entreat you now to relieve me of all doubt or suspicion that has harassed me in the past—any certainty were preferable, I am sure of that. You are an exile from the England you love,—tell me, is this privation endured *solely* in consequence of— ?'

'Incurred for *his* sake, it has ceased to be privation,' replied Courtenay, with emphasis.

Beatrice caught his hand, and pressed it to her lips passionately.

'What, then, will be the labour undertaken for him and for you?' she asked. 'You see now my design.'

'My child, my child, this must not be;' and Courtenay clasped her to his bosom.

'It must. I cannot go from you with a slighter purpose than this. I have undertaken—I have promised—' She gasped for breath.

'What, Beatrice?'

'To be to you all he should have been. His reliance on my faithful adherence to this promise was his last earthly comfort — it alone can sustain me in the separation I have long contemplated, and now consent to—'

She hid her face on her grandfather's bosom, weeping.

Courtenay knew that, mild and docile as Beatrice was, he should never wean her from a purpose thus embraced. He held her in his arms, while he thoughtfully contrasted her docility and ordinary composure of deportment with that vehemence which from time to time manifested itself as an equally decided feature of her character. While thus

musing, an idea flashed across his mind at which he shuddered; then he contemplated it in silence, and at length spoke in a grave, low tone:—

'Be it so, my child. You do well to follow a course which a wise and devoted friend has marked out for you. Go forth, and sustain yourself with high and holy purposes; I forbid you not. With God's blessing, I may not need the fruit of your labours. In yonder desk lies what should have enriched us both ere now, and will, I doubt not, when this hand is mouldering in the grave, repay you for my long days and nights of thought. But, for the present, my own, my kind friend Mr. Howard's exertions, have failed. All acknowledge these MSS. to be invaluable, it is true, but as yet unavailable. We must wait. Meanwhile, Beatrice, I have one injunction to lay on you, one promise to exact, and your past dutifulness assures me of obedience.'

Beatrice raised her head.

'Let me hear what you require before a promise passes my lips.'

'You shall; that is but just. Whatever your talents may prove—whatever impulse come from within, whatever solicitation from without,—remember, Beatrice, it is my command that no prospect of a brilliant career, of rapid gains, prevail with you to go on the stage. Your mind is pure, your principles are firm; but most iniquitous would it be in me to allow you, in your unprotected orphanhood, to enter on a course so perilous, for any hope of earthly wealth. I forbid it, Beatrice—I utterly forbid it; and I expect you to give me now a full assurance of obedience.'

Courtenay had worked himself up to a pitch of excitement very unusual with him. Beatrice, with a serenity which gave her the aspect of a consoling angel at his side, clasped his hands in hers, and said, in a low, soft voice—

'You cannot suppose that I would ever have taken such a measure unauthorised by you, unarmed by your full consent? Should I not need all the support of it, to nerve me to the effort? But would a promise calm you? It is given.'

After this conversation with her grandfather, Beatrice spoke again with Mr. Howard.

'You,' she said timidly, as she disclosed her purposes to him, 'have so much more knowledge of the world than we possess. You will tell me how all I wish can be accomplished.'

'My generous child,' interrupted Mr. Howard, 'I must first consider whether it ought even to be undertaken.'

'Indeed it ought—it must,' replied Beatrice, earnestly. 'There are other claims on me, I know; —debts of gratitude to you—I am not forgetful.'

'Beatrice, Beatrice, never let me hear such terms applied again to anything that passes between us. Has not your fresh young heart blessed me with its love almost as a father through long years otherwise barren of joy?'

'Oh! do not say that,' exclaimed Beatrice, with an expression of the utmost pain.

'Well, then never talk of gratitude again; let us understand that it is mutual.'

Mr. Howard now applied his thoughts seriously to the best means of accomplishing for Beatrice her

tion that I can show her a living Englishwoman the counterpart of this lovely picture.'

Great was the popularity of Mr. Howard among the best artists of the day. Few of them would have gainsaid him, had he equalled his own paintings, as he did his countrywoman, to Raphael. It was our old friend Oreste whom he addressed, who, shrugging his shoulders, replied with his usual mixture of candour, humour, and caution:

'I will not deny to our city the honour of possessing a wonderful type of that picture, living and breathing in all the beauty of seventeen, well known to the Signor Oarde, and equally so to his humble servant Oreste Gualandi; but I will dispute the justice of the claim he lays on her as his compatriot alone; she is equally our own. Her mother was Italian, and her father an Englishman.'

'A true English girl in heart,' cried Mr. Howard, laughing: 'enough so to satisfy you, Miss Lindsay,' he added, turning to the younger of the ladies. 'There is something very pretty and interesting in the affection she entertains for the two countries, deprived as she is of both her parents, and cherishing their memories with equal enthusiasm.'

'Poor child! is she an orphan?'

'Yes; she lives with her grandfather in the same palace as my friend Oreste. Would you like me to bring her to see you?'

'Oh, pray do!' cried Lady St. Helens. 'I shall be delighted to behold anything so lovely as she must be. You know the passion I have for beauty; how I discover it wherever it exists—on canvas, in life. I live—I feast on it. But tell me frankly, my

dear friend, is your beauty insipid or clever?—am I just to look, and no more?—or does she realise what Campbell means when he speaks of the soul that looks from such a face? Has she a soul?'

'I will not prejudice you, Lady St. Helens,' replied Mr. Howard, 'for I will not give you any answer. You shall see her if you please, and decide for yourself.'

From the palace, the party passed to the pleasant gardens. As they walked among the pines, and the fountains, and the orange-trees, many other of their countrymen, and acquaintances of various nations, joined them, thronging round Lady St. Helens, not more remarkable for her air of fashion than for her beauty, and leaving Miss Lindsay at liberty to follow her own inclination, which led her to walk a little aside with Mr. Howard, an old friend, to whom she wore an air of consideration and affection which particularly gratified him. True, he knew that the Countess could better appreciate his accomplished mind, his taste, his just criticisms, his varied knowledge; or, at least, could show a more ready appreciation of them than Anne Lindsay. But he had not unfrequently found that Anne treasured up carefully remarks not very available as current coin to be passed on—sayings such as would scarcely be accepted as impromptus from Lady St. Helens' own lips.

'I think I have heard you say'—'I remember'—were phrases which came sweetly and simply from Anne's mouth, when no one was at hand to hear except himself. Mr. Howard was a keen observer of physiognomy, and he could read in Anne's fair, sweet-tempered face, which some called heavy,

indications of more than ordinary intelligence, and a lurking sense of the ridiculous. For these, and reasons more, Anne was a favourite with Mr. Howard in a degree that he hardly made evident to Lady St. Helens. Now we have known Mr. Howard as the patron of Oreste, the friend of Courtenay, the self-instituted guardian of Beatrice; but who can he be, whose favour could thus excite jealousy in the heart of a lady so flattered, so sought after, as the Countess? Who is Mr. Howard? is a question which no one appears very well able to answer: at least, no one who has visited Florence since he took up his abode in it. His name sounds well, and he undoubtedly is worthy of it. Look at him, and see if there can be a moment's hesitation in pronouncing him a gentleman—of the old school, of course. Remark the fine outline of his head. Did you ever see any more intellectual? It must be allowed that, he being considerably below the ordinary height, it was disproportionably large; but then the grand development of forehead, the mild melancholy of the deep-set eye, the refinement of the features, the extreme brilliancy and sweetness of the smile, gave a charm to the whole countenance, to which no stranger of any nation, no child of any age, proved invincible: add to this, the most musical of voices.

Although nobody knew much about Mr. Howard, Mr. Howard knew a great deal about everybody. Half an hour's conversation with him was sure to reveal to you an intimacy between him and one or other of your intimate friends; and if hereafter you have the opportunity of asking him or her who that

very delightful Mr. Howard is, the reply comes—'Delightful, is he not? I met him at Lord C——'s, or Lady D——'s. Everybody knows him.' But the fact remains as before—that everybody knows him not.

But there were other inquiries not unfrequently made by those who went below the surface in their intercourse with this singular and remarkable person. What was the source of the one bitter current in waters else so sweet?—what the occasion of the oppressive lassitude discoverable in one whose intellect was richly stored, and whose heart was expansive? Why were there none nearer or dearer to him than the passing acquaintance? Whence arose those fits of melancholy, the effects of which could not be concealed, although during their reign he shunned all eyes? Had all the youth of his heart undergone a sudden destruction in the shock of disappointed love, or of blasted ambition? Courtenay, who, as his countryman, and a man of peculiar delicacy and nobleness of mind, had won much of Howard's regard and confidence, had long since replied to questions such as these in his own heart, but would never utter the solution he had given them to any human ear. The cause of Howard's secret unhappiness Courtenay traced to the absence of settled religious convictions. He had never grasped the sure anchor of the soul, never placed himself securely on the Rock higher than he; daily dying the death which excruciates the sensibilities of higher natures, but never dying daily with Christ—therefore never rising daily with Him, above the storms of this lower atmosphere. Gloomy at times

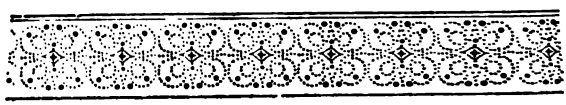
as Leopardi, whose eloquent strains too often engaged his mind, but far more manly, no friend, man or woman, ever heard from the lips of Howard the querulous threats of self-destruction in which the wretched poet could find solace, or food for vanity, while the reading of such only curled the Englishman's lip with scorn. Howard resembled rather what Pascal might have been, could he have made shipwreck of the faith he grasped with the tenacity of one struggling amid the billows of the world for much more than life—willing, and even wisely willing, to bow his majestic intellect to every puerility forced on it, rather than for one moment to impair that singleness of eye with which he looked on with eager gaze to the all-satisfying end. And thus Howard might have been a better and a wiser, as well as a far happier man, labouring under the burden of all the clogs and hindrances of a superstitious faith, than standing, as he did, on a proud eminence, in a nakedness of soul which exposed him to the keenest anguish, as he encountered the blasts which sweep from every quarter in turn over the face of the globe.

But why, it may be asked, should alternatives so gloomy be contemplated for Howard, who, as an Englishman, might have enjoyed freedom of intellect and fulness of faith at one and at the same time; and who, even here in a foreign land, had teaching near, from the lips of Courtenay, at once enlightened, pious, and fervent? Why did he, as it were, content himself to endure privations similar to those of a blind and deaf man, rather than apply to that Physician who could open his ear to hear and his

eyes to see sounds and sights which should have banished heart-sadness, and called him to 'rejoice evermore?' Why, indeed? sadly asked Courtenay, and then turned to pray, and to teach Beatrice to pray for their benefactor, with patience and diligence unwearied, and hope undying.

The world at large contented itself with declaring Mr. Howard to be a very eccentric man; for it was very eccentric in him to pace round and round the deserted cloisters of Santa Maria Novella, when all people who wished to make a respectable appearance were at church. Courtenay once strove to probe deeper, and there was a bonhommie and a depth of love in look and tone which forbid Howard to repel his attempt as an impertinence. He did not at the time respond to it; but on an after occasion he laid his hand gravely on Courtenay's arm, and said, 'My friend, if yonder building be the temple of a God, I dare not mock Him by entering it as I am.'

Courtenay would have combated this conclusion; but Howard closed the conversation with irresistible though gentle force.



CHAPTER VIII.

. . . . . What you do
Still betters what is done. . . .
. . . . . when you sing,
I'd have you buy and sell so; so give alms,
Pray so, and for the ordering of your affairs
To sing them too.

WINTER'S TALE.

AS Mr. Howard took leave of Lady St. Helens in the Piazza Pitti, he reiterated his promise to bring the young English girl of whom he had spoken, to see her that evening, at her hotel on the Lungarno. He commissioned Oreste to tell Beatrice to expect him, and promised to give the painter an opinion he had begged on a fancy picture which now occupied him. Accordingly, after the frugal meal which always satisfied him, Mr. Howard set forth to accomplish his double purpose. Oreste was anxiously awaiting his visitor; he had placed his picture in a favourable light, and was regarding it with enthusiastic fondness now from one corner, now from another of the apartment, while Maddalena, with her usual placid smile, at once calmed and encouraged him.

'It is worthy of me, Maddalena!' he exclaimed; 'say, it is worthy of me.'

'It is the prettiest easel picture you have ever produced.'

'Be it so! What then? What is an easel picture? una cosa di nullo!—Oh! my poor Ugolino! wilt thou ever be finished? or wilt thou gnaw thy hands till the rats come to thy help? But why does not the Signor Oarde arrive?'

'He is here,' said Mr. Howard, placing his hand on the painter's shoulder. 'Don't move—I see your work excellently.'

The picture represented a man dying in extreme old age, yet with fire in his eye, and strength in the grasp with which he holds a youth, nearer mature manhood than Flavio, but evidently drawn from him. He listens to his father's last words with grief and earnestness; there is a soft beauty on his face, and a certain irresoluteness in his attitude. At some distance from the pallet, a young woman is kneeling before a shrine to the Madonna; her figure is partially lighted by the lamp burning before the image, and partially by the grey light of morning, which steals through a casement, and, falling on the dying man's face, increases its ghastly hue. Her hands are clasped in the utmost intensity of supplication, and her lips are apart; but her eyes have wandered away, and rest on the old man's countenance with an expression of agonized solicitude.

'Now you would not suppose that the child Beatrice could look like that, would you?' cried Oreste. 'She has marvellous readiness of understanding. Three words of the story in her ear, and there she was before me—the very thing I desired.'

In another part of the picture were soldiers furbishing arms, and regarding their expiring leader with various expressions of sorrow. A Capuchin friar, of a singularly mean and base physiognomy, was placed by himself in the shade.

'There is that rascally Fra Giovacchino—for a rascal he is, gainsay it who will,' muttered Oreste, 'and I have branded him as such to avenge poor Annunziata.'

'I should like to hear your story, Oreste,' said Mr. Howard, regarding the picture with considerable pleasure.

'I am not sure that you would at this present moment, having, as you hinted, further engagements for this evening. If I begin to improvise, which I must do to tell such a history as this, I cannot answer when I may leave off; and on my word, if I do begin, you shall not quit this chamber while one syllable is wanting to make the tale complete.'

'Thanks, good Oreste, for your warning; and you have suggested an idea altogether more worthy of yourself and of your work than making me your sole auditor. The English Countess to whom I presented you, shall hear you improvise and see your picture, and who knows what may be the effect produced? Eh! Signora Maddalena, what say you?'

'Always grateful to our kind patron.'

'I hope you did not omit to give Beatrice notice that she is to accompany me this evening.'

'Oh, no, she is ready,' replied Oreste, calling to her from the gallery of the court. Beatrice quickly descended, dressed in the only costume she ever

wore when she walked with Mr. Howard—a plain black silk gown, and a large Leghorn hat; while round her neck was the sole ornament she possessed —a string of pearls purchased one by one by Annunziata, with which it was her especial pride to encircle the throat of her darling child.

Beatrice thus simply arrayed, was certainly as lovely a creature as ever painter or poet in this land of painting and poetry dreamed of. And she even yet retained the charm of the unconscious beauty of childhood; which is to be accounted for by the fact that her thoughts were of others, not of herself.

'I am going to take you to see some friends and countrywomen of mine, Beatrice,' said Mr. Howard, with a smile of satisfaction as he looked on her.

'I am ready,' replied Beatrice, with the composed and perfectly unaffected dignity which Maddalena loved in her.

The two set out together. They had not far to walk before they reached the Lungarno. A flower-girl passed them, who immediately held out to Beatrice a white rose-bud, exclaiming with admiration—

'Bella rosa che tu sei, prendi.'

And Beatrice with a smile accepted the flower.

On entering the hotel, Mr. Howard and Beatrice were led into the magnificent apartments of the first floor. The walls of the rooms were hung with tapestry, or painted in fresco, and adorned with gilding and mirrors. Casts of the best statues stood on the inlaid floors, and tables of polished marbles occupied the centre of the sala. The

general aspect was that of a palace rather than of an hotel, and Lady St. Helens, reclining on a sofa of rich damask, a silver salver covered with fruit by her side, contemplated it with satisfaction. Anne Lindsay was standing in an open balcony; beyond her a fountain played in the midst of flowers; she came in to welcome her old friend and new guest. The two ladies exchanged glances expressive to Mr. Howard of as much admiration as he could desire. A guitar was lying on a cushion.

'Are you fond of music?' asked Anne, as she followed Beatrice's eye to the instrument.

'Oh! very,' replied Beatrice, timidly.

'Do you like the guitar?'

'Very much.'

'Can you play it?'

'I have none.'

As Beatrice answered shyly in monosyllables, Mr. Howard came to her aid.

'Beatrice is very fond of music, and I know it would be a great pleasure to her to hear Miss Lindsay's guitar.'

'Then certainly she shall,' replied Anne, with a good-natured smile; and taking it up, she began to tune the strings. 'We are all fond of music, Mr. Howard. I assure you my brother sings very well; even my aunt allows that, judge as she is.'

Lady St. Helens smiled an assent, then added, languidly, 'Indeed, my dear Anne, I like your voice also particularly. Pray sing that pretty Venetian barcarolla.'

Anne took up her guitar simply, rather awk-

wardly, and, without any arrangement of herself or it, sang correctly, sweetly, and with spirit (though it was not the spirit of coquetry), the air for which Lady St. Helens had asked.

Lady St. Helens listened as if she found the performance a little vapid, and rising from her reclining position, exclaimed, almost before the song was finished—

'Here, my dear Anne, lend me the guitar. I want Mr. Howard to hear the Spanish melody that clever creature was trying to teach me this morning. I was so stupid over it—I am afraid I have not caught it now.'

A more striking contrast than the Countess presented to her niece cannot be imagined. She was tall and graceful; the raven tresses of her hair hung never in very exact order round her face and neck; her forehead was of a creamy whiteness; eyebrows most pathetically curved added to the sentimental character of her large grey eyes and black eyelashes; her complexion was brilliant, her teeth pearly, her smile frequent, yet by no means to an experienced observer convincingly indicative of a sweet temper. She placed herself in a graceful attitude, threw back her head with a little laugh meant to conciliate forgiveness for all shortcomings, and then sang an air which was very romanesque, and required for its accompaniment a variety of taps on the sounding-board and thrums on the strings, which Anne would have performed very unskilfully. The Countess had not a fine voice, but she had a correct ear and taste, and knew how to make everything agreeable that she attempted. Her small audience listened with

such evident pleasure, that she gave them a second song, and then laid the guitar languishingly aside. This was the moment chosen by Mr. Howard for saying—

'I should like you to hear Miss Courtenay sing.'

'Miss Courtenay—how terribly English!—and she is so enchantingly Italian in looks and in manner.'

'Oh! not quite in manner, I hope,' said Beatrice, casting a look of appeal on Anne, who smiling good-humouredly, replied—

'No, no; we will own you for a countrywoman. You must come to England, and get rid of your foreign ways.'

'I would not have her get rid of them for the world,' exclaimed Lady St. Helens, with vehemence.

Mr. Howard returned to his point: 'Beatrice has had the best instructions that Florence affords. I should like now to enjoy the benefit of your opinion, for I have set my heart on making a proficient of my favourite.'

'Don't frighten her,' said Lady St. Helens, placing her jewelled fingers on Mr. Howard's arm.

'We must not shorten Lady St. Helens' drive in the Cascine, Beatrice; sing one song before we take leave.'

Beatrice, accustomed to a ready compliance with his wishes, conquered timidity enough to obey, though not enough to prevent the first notes of her song from being tremulous; but so genuine was her enthusiasm in the exercise of her art, that in a few moments she was less anxious to please Mr. Howard,

less fearful to displease the Countess, than she was absorbed in the song itself.

Her beautiful soprana voice gushed forth in a tide of melody that amazed and enchanted her hearers; the song she had chosen was 'Son vergine vezzosa.'

'Brava, brava!' exclaimed Lady St. Helens; and she poured out a torrent of Italian praise as the meed worthy of the fair cantatrice.

'Beautiful!' said Anne, in a low voice, and drawing a deep breath of admiration.

'I am delighted beyond expression,' continued the Countess. 'Why, what a wonder of the world this is! Is not all Florence mad about her?'

'Her grandfather and I have taken especial pains to prevent that, my dear Lady St. Helens. I assure you, to see and to hear Beatrice is a pleasure permitted to few. Here I knew she would be appreciated.'

Beatrice, to whom this language was absolutely new, was like one in a dream.

'I insist on taking her and you with me this evening to the Cascine. I cannot think of, or look at, or speak to any one else. Cara Beatrice, you must not refuse me.'

Beatrice turned to Mr. Howard, who gave his assent.

Greatly was Beatrice fascinated by the beauty and the affability of the Countess; yet, not even in this the first hour of their influence did they render her insensible to Anne's honest friendliness of manner, which particularly pleased her as directed towards Mr. Howard. She thought she could perceive that Miss Lindsay's sentiments had something

in their nature of the almost filial affection with which she herself regarded him.

The hours went too swiftly: the weather was lovely; everything, everybody seemed to welcome Beatrice; and at night, when alone in her little chamber (Annunziata was fast asleep), there was a yet deeper delight experienced as she reflected on the pleasure that was passed, and exclaimed to herself:

'Then I have not laboured in vain—I have repaid all Mr. Howard's cares. How far beyond anything I could expect were the Countess's expressions of praise! and Mr. Howard appealed to her, he seemed to think that her opinion was not to be doubted. My prayers are about to be answered; my desires will be accomplished. Happy, happy Beatrice! Oh! my father, dost thou know how happy thy child is?

'Dear grandfather, you little know all the delightful hopes and designs with which this fond heart is throbbing, so near your own!'

She started up, feeling as if she could scarcely refrain from seeking her grandfather at once, and telling him all that had happened. But she lay softly down again, and at length slept.

At daybreak Annunziata stood beside her:

'Bambina mia, you have rested ill; you tossed from side to side, and you sang in your sleep.'

'No wonder, dear Annunziata,' cried Beatrice, smiling brightly,—'no wonder. Don't be surprised if I sing always now. I cannot tell you all the kind things the English Countess said to me last night when I sang to her, nor how satisfied Mr. Howard was; and your Beatrice, she was not a little pleased either; for you well know,' she added, gravely,

'how my thoughts have, for some time, turned on my silly voice being one day of use to my dear grandfather.'

'I don't know what all this means,' replied Annunziata, pettishly. 'Il Signor Oarde is a strange man, always full of his schemes—and you are a child—and the nonno, he lives with his head in the clouds. I hope all will turn out well; but, for my part, I think you are beautiful and good enough to match with the first of our nobles. Noble you are in your own country, are you not?—the blood of emperors flows in your veins—so Signor Oreste told me, or I would not have served you as I have. This is what ought to employ your countryman's thoughts, and he could bring it to pass if he would.'

'Peace, peace, Annunziata,' said Beatrice, with a blush, putting her hand on her nurse's mouth. 'Neither his thoughts nor mine ever take that direction. But now I must get up; there is much to do, for the Countess insisted that we—that is, my grandfather and I—should come to her this morning, before she goes out.'

And Beatrice was singing all the time she was dressing. It was not a very common occurrence to see an exuberance of spirits in her, and Annunziata could not but take pleasure in her happiness, though, as she continued to murmur, she was somewhat suspicious of Mr. Howard's plans concerning her darling.

CHAPTER IX.

Of Nature's gifts thou mayst with lilies boast,
And with the half-blown rose.

SHAKESPEARE.

MR. HOWARD had introduced Beatrice to the notice of the Countess of St. Helens without any positive project; but from the first burst of her enthusiastic admiration, he framed one. He had cast the future of the young girl constantly in his mind of late. He seemed to have done all he could do, and was at a loss to proceed, when Lady St. Helens appeared in Florence. He knew her well as a patroness of the fine arts, an ardent seeker of the rare and beautiful, a jealous appropriatress of whatever challenged admiration: her liberality was profuse; her wealth vast, and chiefly at her command; for, wife of Sir Roderic Lindsay, a Scotch baronet, she was also a Countess in her own right.

That Beatrice should exercise her talents in England, and reap the rich harvest which that country affords, was certainly the advisable course to pursue; but Courtenay could not render it practicable, and Howard himself discerned no mode whereby to effect it so promising as that of making her the protégée of the Countess. He well knew the attendant disadvan-

tages, but avoided a close searching into them, lest the discoveries he should make might frighten him from the accomplishment of the scheme. Lady St. Helens really had musical taste and knowledge, and would hold Beatrice's talents in due estimation. Was it possible that she should pass from admiration to envy? He trusted it was not. Beatrice, as her attendant star, would but heighten her brilliancy. The lady was proverbially fickle; but by the time she wearied of Beatrice, Beatrice might have gained a footing independent of her support. 'A time comes when the scaffolding may be thrown down, and the building stands complete,' he thought.

He was aware that the Countess required flattery and obedience. Beatrice knew not what the first in its falseness meant; but nothing could be more gratifying than her genuine admiration of Lady St. Helens' charms, and her gratitude for the kindness lavished on her; and having all her life been used to yield unhesitating compliance to those she loved, without one servile thought she would render a submission as complete as the veriest tyrant could desire, on all points where merely her own wishes were concerned. Annunziata's imperious temper had exercised her in gentleness and patience. But as Mr. Howard began to reflect on the unsophisticated simplicity of the girl and all her docile virtues, he felt some compunction in plunging her at once in total ignorance, into the whirlpool of fashion. He sighed, but he did not—he said he could not relinquish the project, for what else was to be done with her? He took comfort in the thought of Anne Lindsay, retaining her honest plainness of speech

and rectitude of conduct in the pernicious atmosphere which Beatrice would be forced to breathe. To be sure, she had not Beatrice's beauty and talent to win her the flattery which dazzles. She was rather a stander-by, than an actress on the stage on which Lady St. Helens loved to exhibit herself and her favourites, of whom Anne was not one.

'She is worth a thousand Countesses,' Mr. Howard cordially pronounced; 'but she cannot be Beatrice's patroness. I will see that she is her friend.'

'Has the Countess been long a widow?' asked Beatrice of Mr. Howard, not venturing as yet to appeal to Miss Lindsay to unravel any little mystery in which she found herself involved.

'A widow! silly child! what can you mean? Why do you kill her husband, pray?'

'Oh! then she has one!' exclaimed Beatrice, in a tone of pleasure as well as surprise. 'I am very glad of that. But I am sure I never heard her mention him,' she added with a perplexed air.

'You may have heard him mentioned without recognising him as her husband, for he bears quite a different name. He is Sir Roderic Lindsay, while she is Countess of St. Helens.'

'Ah! Miss Lindsay's uncle.'

'He went from Rome to Scotland; the ladies return by land, passing the summer months in Switzerland—a very pleasant scheme: if I were not too old to be a chevalier des dames, I would offer my attendance. Now explain to me the source of your great satisfaction on learning that the Countess is not a widow?'

'Why, I think it must be that so much magnificence, so much gaiety, did not seem to suit widowhood. I did not understand how she could appear so happy, yet at times I fancied I could trace a secret sorrow under it.'

'I know of none. She has never lost a child, I believe. If such melancholy exist, it is probably the effect of the lassitude produced by a life of fashion, Beatrice. Do you imagine such a position as hers to be enviable?'

'I never considered it, I believe; except that sometimes I have thought—' Beatrice paused.

'What, Beatrice?'

'That it must be very delightful to be able to be as kind and generous as she is.'

'True,' replied Mr. Howard. 'You have hit on the chief gratification of a high station. What would you say, if Lady St. Helens were to offer to exert her generosity on your behalf, and to take you to England, introduce you, facilitate the accomplishment of the object of your education?'

Beatrice looked Mr. Howard earnestly in the face. A full conviction of the reality of his words impressed itself on her mind; she turned slowly away, and wept in silence.

'You must not answer her with tears, Beatrice,' said Mr. Howard, kindly.

The girl raised her face; it was very pale: in a tone of profound pathos she said—

'To go hence, to leave all I love—all I am used to; they to be without me—I without them! Alone in the world!—ah! better alone in a desert.' She seated herself as she spoke, dropped her hands in

her lap in an attitude of dejection, and after a few moments' pause, she added, looking upwards—

'As near those in Heaven there as here—and those I leave would have me go. I know it. Nor must I lose any time. My grandfather, he sometimes looks pale and feeble—God grant that my harvest may be early enough for him to reap its fruits! I am ready, quite ready!'

'But why speak thus of loneliness, and of leaving all you love? I thought you already loved the Countess and Miss Lindsay.'

'Yes,' said Beatrice; 'but the love of to-day and the love that is to be, may they compare with the affections that run in my veins, or have subsisted for years? But enough: if it be as you say, I will go with them lovingly and gratefully, and God will help me on my way.'

And it was as Mr. Howard said. It needed very little instigation on his part to draw forth from the Countess the frankest and warmest proposals to make Beatrice one of her family, to convey her to England, and when there, to make every effort to accomplish whatever could be desired for her. Mr. Howard did not consider himself justified in refusing, or counselling the refusal of offers so advantageous and well-timed; and Courtenay, guided by him, gave a grateful consent, and bore in silence the pang it inflicted. What the decision of Courtenay or his granddaughter would have been, had Mr. Howard revealed all the knowledge he possessed of Lady St. Helens' character, it is useless to inquire; he left them in darkness, which he deemed more beneficial than light. He could not be quite blind to

a certain gleam of surprise that passed across Anne Lindsay's face when she first learned his willingness to commit his favourite to the charge of her aunt; and it was in a half apologetic tone that he rehearsed to her some of the reasons by which he was actuated. 'What was I likely to be able to do for her, that would be more advantageous, or even equally so, than this may prove?' was his answer to his own misgivings; but it could not be uttered in similar words to Miss Lindsay, though she could read pretty plainly his meaning and his doubts, in his various modes of recommending Beatrice to her care, and his attempts to derive from her a clear knowledge of the dangers and difficulties most likely to beset inexperience. Anne felt her respect for Mr. Howard somewhat impaired by his present proceeding. She regarded Beatrice with compassion. She blamed and yet pitied the former, and she pitied without blaming the latter. She looked on the young girl as one turned adrift in a little boat, on a proverbially treacherous lake, by an experienced sailor, who ought to have known better than to let her run such risk. She, standing on the shore, watching the fairy bark, its white sail glistening in the bright sunshine and fluttering in the favourable breeze, felt desirous to render her knowledge available to its unsuspicious occupant, as far as she could do so without heightening her peril by the diminution of her confidence.

'She is too good to be the sport of an hour,' she thought; 'more bright and beautiful than any that have gone before. And I am losing my heart to one of my aunt's butterflies? Yes—there is

your regard for her,' interrupted Mr. Howard, warmly. 'Indeed, my dear Miss Lindsay, were it not for your presence, I do not think I could let my child depart. I commend her to you most earnestly. You cannot be yet acquainted with half the loveliness of her character. She is rich in

'All with which Nature halloweth her daughters."

'I believe it,' said Anne, in tones that sounded sober, compared to those in which the Countess spoke the praises of Beatrice, but which inspired Mr. Howard with the utmost confidence.

There was yet another person to consent to Beatrice's departure; this was Annunziata. On hearing the proposal, she remained, as she said, 'stupefatta.' Then, with a burst of eloquence, she declared, 'If the Signorina goes, I go with her. When does she depart? I am ready. Annunziata has little to take, and little to leave. The child shall not go hence by herself, to pine and die. Her father and mother both died young; so would she, if uncared for by any she has been used to from her youth. I have said.'

She never for a moment relinquished this design, nor did it appear to concern her whether or not others considered it feasible. How acceptable it was to Beatrice, was evinced, in spite of herself, by the increased serenity of her countenance and elasticity of her step. Mr. Howard, who had watched with deep concern her struggles for cheerfulness, could not reject that which seemed to restore it, and the addition of Annunziata, with the romance which attended it, was by no means displeasing to the Countess.

CHAPTER X.

Till you taught my nature
Like a rude storm to talk aloud and thunder,
Sleep was not gentler than my soul, and stiller.
SHAKESPEARE.

BUT Oreste—Mr. Howard did not forget his promise to him? Certainly not. One evening before the departure of the Countess, her salon in the hotel was lighted, a select number of her friends were assembled in it, and at the further end of the room was Oreste's picture, placed on an easel, and appearing to great advantage, while Oreste himself, casting away a little shyness which at times overtook him to his own dismay and surprise, stood beside it. Mr. Howard moved about among the guests, commenting on the merits of the painting, and mentioning that the fact represented was the death of Pier Saccone dei Tarlati, the celebrated bandit chief of the fourteenth century, striking and remarkable enough as related by Sismondi, without the adjuncts which the painter's and poet's fancy furnished.

Beatrice and Flavio were there, side by side, their eyes fixed intently on Oreste, as he began—

O'er Pietra Mala rolled the wintry storm,
As on a mission, with its mighty voice
To call the dying chieftain's soul away,
And bear it onward on the howling blast—
Meet messenger to one who fourscore years
Had vowed to blood, to rapine and revenge,
And even now was gladdened by the sound
Of the wild war without. He lay, and watched
The elements' contention with delight
Fierce as had filled him when, from rocky crag,
He had looked down upon a struggling host,
And marked their deeds of valour, till he longed
To urge his charger on, and plunge below.
The mists that rushed across the argent moon
Were like armed squadrons hurrying to engage,
And ever and anon the lightning's flash
Bade the dark cloud recoil like shrivelling scroll;
And mountain-top to mountain-top gave forth
The thunder's bandied menace, while the wind
Swept moaning through the chesnut grove that girt
The castle height no foe had ever scaled.
'My son, this is thy father's dying hour—
The Heavens, they know it! Shall his foes sleep on?
Or if the whirlwind wake them, turn and say,
'Tis but the murmur of the shivering trees—
Without a leader are Saccone's spears.
'Tis but the pattering hail, not metalled hoof
Of horses, that we hear; no night-surprise
Threatens us more. Piero sleeps in death.'
Weep not beside me, boy. Tears ill become
Thy father's son. Hear my expiring wish:
Gird on my sword, and call my followers round.
Go—scale the walls of Gressa. Bid their lord
Quail, though his ancient enemy be dead!'
Young Marco saw the flicker of fierce joy
Light up his eye, and, shuddering, he implored:
'Send me not from thee, father, till thine ear
Be deaf to all my words of love, thy gaze
No longer answer mine. I have obeyed

With a meet reverence thy behests till now.
The hawk upon thy hand, thy crouching hound,
The steed that leaped with joy beneath thy weight,
Were not more mindful of thy slightest word
Than I have been. Then bid me, father, stay.'
The old man smiled: ''Tis my last thought of glee
To rouse the Bishop from his morning dreams;
Then disappoint me not, but haste to prove
To all my gallant band that, wanting me,
They yet a chief retain.'

Irresolute
The youth with glance unconscious sought his bride,
And saw her praying at the Virgin's shrine,
Lit by the tiny lamp her hands had trimmed,
For him who lay in the death agony.
Her lowly attitude beseemed the prayer,
But her dilated eyes were fixed upon
That hoary man who still of vengeance raved.
Her cheek grew pale as she his meaning drank,
And, springing to her feet, she seized the arm
Of a tall, sallow-visaged monk, who stood
Near to the pallet, murmuring in his ear—
'Forbid this crime for the Redeemer's sake!
Tell him, of blood and guilt he hath enough
To bear upon him to the judgment-seat.
Bid him not send my husband forth to fall.'
But the wretch trembled at Saccone's glare,
Nor dared to speak the mandate of his Lord.
She turned her to an aged soldier near,
Furbishing arms, and said, in milder tones:
'Oh! follow not to death thy chieftain young.
His father's stratagem and strength of arm
Failed of this feat—then why should he prevail?'
'He must attempt,' the veteran said, 'or men
Will lightly hold his courage. Lady, peace!'
'Peace!' Paolina cried, ''tis peace I ask!'
As lioness upon the hunter turns
Who seeks to steal her cubs, to Marco's sire
She next her speech directs, first snatching from

The monk's astonished grasp the crucifix :
'See here, old man, the emblem of our faith,
And all thy hope; repent thee of thy crimes,
Nor seal thy doom by murder of thy son.
My Marco shall not quit his home, his wife!'
'Give me my father's sword,' the young man cried,
(For, looking round, he saw on every brow
A sullen discontent, as they would cry—
'Shall women be our rulers?—rule our chief?')
'I am prepared, and follow me who will!'
Old Piero clapped his feeble hands; the youth
Sprang to his wife, and clasped her in his arms.
More fondly than in love's first hour he kissed
Her quivering lips, and silenced their complaint.
'See, see, the morning breaks—I must be gone—
Bring forth my snow-white steed. Arm, men, and mount.
Beside my father, Paolina, watch—
He is my father—dear one, watch for me!
I will be here by noon; meanwhile look up—
See yonder star, within its lake of blue
Serenely beautiful! Let that star speak
Of love and hope to thee. Farewell, farewell!'
She watched beside the dying man till dawn—
Watched till her solitary star had quenched
Its rays in light, and with them quenched her hope.
'Why comes he not?' Piero feebly groaned.
She left his side, and from the casement gazed,
But no returning horseman met her sight.
'Why comes he not?' he querulously asked;
'What! must I die, my foeman's fall unknown,
Triumph untasted, and my noble boy
Unblessed? Paolina, are they yet in view?'
She heeded not his questions nor his plaints.
'Fain would I close for aye these weary eyes,
Fain rest these aching limbs.' 'Twas then she turned.
'Thou ask'st in vain for rest till Marco comes.
That spirit which has warred with all men's peace
Shall lack it now. Live in thy doubt and fear;
I bid thee tarry till his doom be sealed.'

The tardy hours crept by, and still he cried,
'I fain would die,' and still in hollow tones
She bid him linger on.
Now she beholds
A solitary horseman at the foot
Of the steep mountain path. 'Tis not the steed—
'Tis not the snowy plume on Marco's helm.
And further she discerns a little band
That climb the hill together, for they bear
A burden 'mong them. 'Come they yet in view?'
She has passed by him like the lightning flash;
Her wild eye scorched him as she went. She fled
Down the stone steps, and to the postern-gate.
'Otto! how darest thou thus outstrip thy lord?
Was his steed maimed? Could he not mount on thine?'
'Dear lady—he himself—' 'Is wounded?—speak!'
'Is stretched on yonder bier.' 'Approach—approach—
Ye cannot come too quick who bear my love!
Hither,' she frantic cried, 'and follow me!'
Back to the chamber of the expiring man
She sprang with speed that mocked their burdened steps.
'Place him beside his sire. Now, old man, die;
Die, if thou canst, in peace, for I forgive!'
Then Paolina sank upon the corse,
And her heart broke for her young Marco's death!

This brief version of Oreste's narrative must fail to convey any idea of the interest it excited as it poured from his lips in the accents of his native tongue, with eloquence that knew no pause, and aided by powerful expression of tone, gesture, and countenance. Some of his auditors wept, and Anne Lindsay, though none discovered it, was of the number. More applauded with enthusiasm, and of these was the Countess herself.

'Good, my friend—very good,' was Mr. Howard's brief, emphatic comment.

she raised her hand to her eyes, and passionately dashed away the tears which dimmed them. And now they sparkled as if with anger, and with a sudden burst of that volubility which she shared as the common gift of her compatriots, she exclaimed—

'Presumptuous!—ungrateful! If you go to England, is there any choice for Annunziata? What! you, a child!—you, in good truth, would set forth by yourself to see the world! You would think for yourself, act for yourself, as you have here at home for your grandfather, doubtless. Ask yourself what you would have done together these long years, had not Annunziata watched by you, cooked for you, taken you out for air? Have you ever known the want of a mother? Yet all this you would cast aside for a whim!—a whim which the Signor Oarde, who spends his time and his money on whims, has fabricated for you. Let me never hear such words pass your lips again. Too much for me to do! And what, may I ask, will you be able to do without me? Let me tell you, once for all, that if poor, despised Annunziata goes not to England, neither does the Signorina, clever as she may think herself.'

Having exhausted the rage which was, in fact, only the refuge of sorrow, Annunziata burst into tears, and rocked herself backwards and forwards to lull the storm of emotion.

For a moment Beatrice had listened to her in painful surprise, but reading the real cause of her violence long before she had arrived at the end of her tirade, the girl, in reply, did but place her hand in that of Annunziata, and gently say:

'No, dearest nurse, your child shall not venture

into the perilous world without you. Well is it for her to have your bosom for her refuge in all her new sorrows and difficulties, as in her old.'

Annunziata drew Beatrice, as she spoke, closely to her, kissing her once or twice passionately.

'But to think,' whispered Beatrice, 'of my grandfather without either of us!'

'He has his books—he has his paper—he has his pen. What could I do for him when you were away? Nothing. I should scold and quarrel with him, for all would go wrong. No, no; the Signor Oreste and the Signor Oarde must see to him.'

A pause ensued, till Annunziata, rising hastily, exclaimed:

'It does not do to think—we must go into the church and pray.'

They traversed the majestic nave in all its length, and descended to the subterranean chapel, where the lamps were burning round the shrine. Kneeling there in the solemn silence of the spot, each poured forth the utterings of the heart to Him who alone can comprehend them. Each grew calmer in praying—first trustful, then hopeful. The God of Love invigorated those who were prepared to encounter all things in love. Annunziata prayed with vehemence; her hands smote her breast. Beatrice might have been a statue of prayer; her lips did not move, her eyes were fixed on the pavement. They rose and quitted the church. Beatrice lingered on the terrace.

'Yet a few moments,' she said, 'to see the sun go down for the last time!—a fitting farewell to Florence. My grandfather cares not how late I am

when with you; and the bright moon has risen behind us.'

'You told me that you must call on the Signor Oarde as we return.'

'I must indeed. Yet let us wait five minutes here.'

Beatrice seated herself on the step, and drew Annunziata down by her side.

With a step as noiseless as he could make it, a youth little older than Beatrice approached, bearing in his hand a branch of roses, culled from the bushes, which remain to tell where the convent garden was. Placing himself beside Beatrice, he laid them in her lap.

'The last roses,' he said,—'the last roses I shall gather for you at San Miniato!'

The girl looked down at the flowers, and her tears fell on them.

'You here, Flavio?' cried Annunziata, roughly.

'Pardon me,' said Flavio. 'Beatrice, you do not reprove?'

'No,' replied Beatrice; 'why should I reprove if you liked to come?' But her kindness seemed to wound more than Annunziata's asperity.

'The same to you whether I come or stay away! I knew it, yet I was resolved that I would walk home by your side this evening—that I would watch your face as you looked your last on Florence, that spot which I must inhabit when you are gone—how long I know not. Will it be preferable, for the sake of the tears you now shed, to any other in the world, where you are not, nor have ever been, or shall I seize the first moment which sets me free to follow you?'

'Oh! Flavio—your mother!'

'What happiness will it be to her to behold my misery?'

'For her sake, be happy,' said Beatrice, placing her hand on his kindly.

'For her sake, make me happy: tell me that you go to return—you will find me a man whom you leave a boy; tell me to love on in confidence—that the time will arrive when you will not disregard the accents which now fall so unheeded on your ear.'

'Flavio, Flavio, have I not already begged you not to distress me thus? Of late you have spared me, and I have again loved your companionship as I did when we were children. Thus it was that I desired we should part, but you have destroyed all that I looked for—'

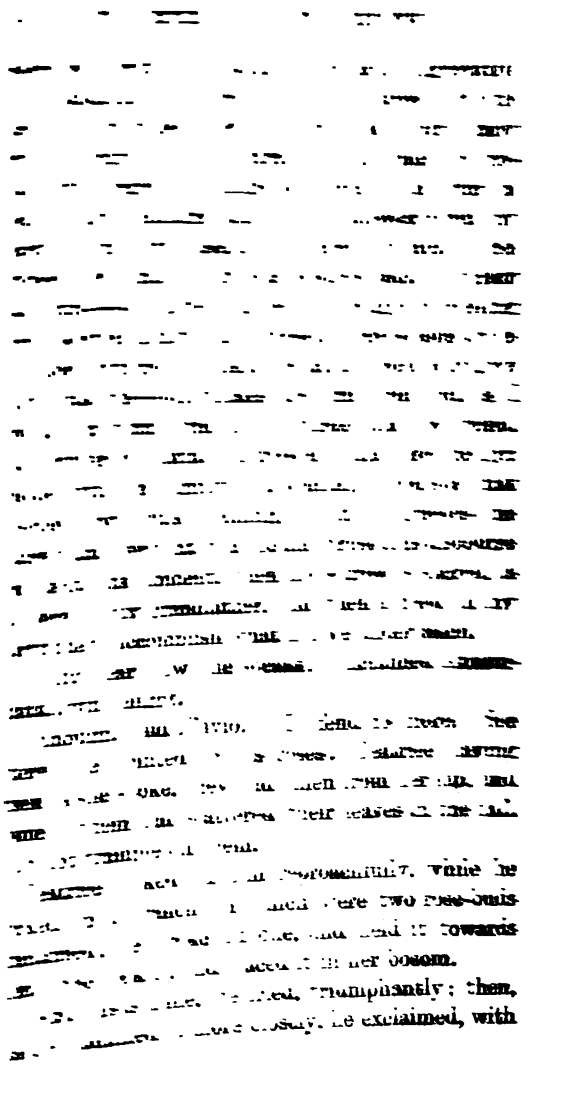
'In vain,' interrupted Flavio. 'I have been silent of late, because silence gained me permission to be at your side, and am so no longer because it now avails me nothing, and I will have in exchange the bitter pleasure of expressing all that I feel.'

Annunziata, at these words, and at the sight of Beatrice's tears, burst with indignation on Flavio:

'Has not my child enough to suffer, that you should come here to make her weep? Begone! your father shall hear of this. You were always overbold, but this is the first day that I have known how far you carried your presumption. Insolent!'

Beatrice turned to her:

'He is young, dear Annunziata. He is the son of our good friend. Be not angry with him, and still less repeat words which he will not be able to use again. And you, Flavio,' she added, with a



bitter disappointment, 'See—a worm has eaten to its core.'

He dashed it from him with Italian vehemence, and darted down the hill.

'Flavio!' cried Beatrice, but he paused not.

'Let him go,' said Annunziata; 'he is mad.' She knew not whether in her heart she was most angry with his presumption, or pleased with his adoration of her child.

At a slower pace they descended the hill, passed the gate, re-entered Florence, and paused under the archway of a gloomy palace before they reached the river. They mounted the stairs, rang the bell at the side of a door, and heard the latch raised in reply. They entered a gallery full of a strange variety of objects: pieces of armour and of arms, tapestry, china, marbles, pictures, and books of all sizes and ages, were crowded together with little arrangement. Annunziata placed herself on a bench near the entrance, and telling Beatrice she would, as was her custom, await her there, fell asleep apparently before the girl had reached the further end of the gallery, and by a light touch gained admittance to the inner chamber, where Mr. Howard sat expectant of her visit.

'You are late, my child,' said he, in a tone of melancholy fondness.

'I could not help it,' replied Beatrice. 'I could not quit San Miniato till the sun went down. To take leave of Florence, and to take leave of you, my grandfather will know cannot be done quickly. He will not expect an early return. Even Annunziata is patient with me.' She smiled sadly, and

took off the large straw hat she wore, laying it on the ground, for her head ached. The old man passed his hand over the dark braids of her hair:

'I shall not be without your picture,' he observed, glancing at a study from the Seggiola which hung against the wall. Beatrice looked up at it.

'I must keep yours in my heart,' she said, 'because you know you have never permitted any one to paint it on canvas. Otherwise, Signor Oreste would have given it to me long ago as a companion to my grandfather's. It was not good of you to refuse. Shall you ever relent, and send it to me?'

'Never, never, Beatrice,' replied Mr. Howard, shaking his head. 'I am a lonely old man, and I would not have one trace of me survive beyond the loving remembrance which friendly hearts may cherish for a while.'

'Mine will never beat forgetful of you,' said Beatrice, slowly. 'How ungrateful if it could!' she added, fancying that she saw a doubt on his countenance. 'Can you believe it possible?' she inquired, with eagerness.

'It would not be possible for you now to anticipate such a time,' he answered, evasively, and Beatrice was wounded; he saw that she was, and he added, 'Nor for me.'

She pressed his hand to her lips; a long silence ensued; Beatrice broke it by saying—

'I thought there were so many things which I must say to you this evening, and now I cannot say any of them. I wanted to thank you, and that you will not permit me to do. I wanted to commit my grandfather to your care, and now my heart tells

me that you will care for him without one word of entreaty on my part.'

'Oh, yes! I will be mindful of him. He shall not walk into the Arno, nor smother himself with his charcoal: and, moreover, I must write to you from time to time to tell you how he fares.'

'Oh! write to me, for I shall be very glad to have your letters; but I am sure he will not fail me in that. I am certain he will never forget nor neglect the promise he has made me,' cried Beatrice, warmly; and again both sank into thought, and neither knew what course the mind of the other was pursuing. This time it was Mr. Howard who spoke:

'Beatrice, I am strangely inclined to show you a picture before you go, which you may never have any future opportunity of seeing. I feel a wish that it should be graven on your memory in union with myself—with this interview, which may be our last.'

'—On earth,' added Beatrice, in a very low but distinct voice. Clear as it was, Mr. Howard gave no sign of hearing it. There was such an extreme pallor over his face, his diminutive form—his intellectual head looked so spiritual, as it were,—that Beatrice gazed on him as on one about to melt from earthly sight.

This strange appearance was increased by the illumination of the lamp which he now lighted, and bore across the room to an antique cabinet, which he proceeded to unlock, and produced from its most secret drawer a small picture. It was the representation of a young girl of a beauty as remarkable

in character as in degree—so purely classical that a sculptor need have desired no other model for a Psyche, while the pensiveness which mingled with its light and playful expression rendered it peculiarly fitted for that subject.

Beatrice surveyed the portrait with extreme interest, and Mr. Howard averting his eyes from it, fixed them on her:

'What should you expect from that face?' at length he asked.

Beatrice hesitated to reply; but she saw, for she understood him well, that he would not dispense with her answer. She bent over the picture, and a tear fell from her eye.

'An early death,' she said.

Mr. Howard murmured, 'Then why did not I—?'

He replaced the picture, and beckoning Beatrice to his side, took out a sheet of paper on which a faint outline was traced: it was that of the same face; the eyes were closed in death, not to be mistaken for sleep.

'Do you think you shall remember her?' he asked, after a while.

'Yes,' replied Beatrice. And he withdrew the paper, closed the cabinet, and returned to his seat. He might have been content that Beatrice should now depart, but she was not content. Her face assumed an expression of solicitude it had not yet worn. She knelt by his side, and when she spoke, her voice trembled.

'Forgive me,' she said, 'pray forgive me if I anger you. I cannot help it. I cannot resolve to see you no more, and to leave unsaid what I have in my

heart. When I knelt and prayed in San Miniato, it was part of my prayers—it ever shall be part of them. Oh! let me speak it this once to your ear, as I spoke it then to the ear of God.'

The earnestness of her supplication could not but touch Howard; yet he manifested unwillingness to let her proceed, which she ventured to disregard:

'All I ask—and often would I have asked it before, when the whispers of others and your own sad brow have troubled me—is that you will not grieve, or muse here alone. I have committed my grandfather to your care; let him but repay that which we receive from you, by whispering in your hours of depression those words of consolation with which he sustained my suffering father. You have sorrowful remembrances; you need repose—a place whereon to lay your head. Oh! my kind friend, let that be the bosom of the Saviour!'

Her clasped hands rested on the old man's knee as she spoke. He bent forward, kissed her pure brow; Beatrice threw herself on his neck:

'May God reward you for all your care and kindness to the orphan child. You are not angry with her?' Her voice died away.

'Angry, my child?—no, but it is time to send you hence. Be satisfied. Your words are neither disregarded nor despised, and come better from your lips than from any others on earth.'

'O that I might stay with you!' exclaimed Beatrice.

'No, no, that may not be. Yet I believe you would stay'—he looked on her with his smile of wonderful sweetness—'stay to make me—' he broke

off. 'Your memory shall be a spell when your presence is at end, Beatrice. Go without a misgiving; you are on your right road. Your grandfather—his claim is first.'

Mr. Howard led her to the end of the gallery, bearing the lamp, the light of which and the sound of their feet roused Annunziata, who muttered some phrases not meant to be intelligible.

'Addio, Annunziata. I know you will take good care of my child.'

'Ay, indeed; who should care for her if I do not? You think, Signor Oarde, that you have done a good deed in sending hence the creatura,' as Annunziata delighted to call Beatrice. 'Heaven grant it may prove so! Addio!'

CHAPTER XII.

How shall I hide thee from the unpitying winds
Of this rude world, and keep thy cheek so fair
In the sweet innocence of unsoiled minds—
From that which, ah! too soon the spirit finds?
If I do love thee with a spirit's love
In this bad earth where sin our vision blinds,
How should I pray some angel from above
May guide thee through this world, and thy sure guardian prove!

THE BAPTISTERY.

AS Annunziata and Beatrice crossed the bridge, a dark figure in a cloak was hanging over the parapet. At their approach, he raised his head, quitted his reclining posture, and moved on at their side: they knew it was Flavio.

'You have been here long,' observed Beatrice, in a tone of mingled pity and annoyance.

'Yes; for I reached the spot long before you did. I watched you enter. I waited for you to come out.'

'Cattivo!' exclaimed Annunziata. 'Loitering away your time after this fashion! We wanted you not. We would much rather be without you.'

'Beatrice,' said the boy, not heeding Annunziata, 'you cannot imagine the wild thoughts that ran in

my brain while I hung over the bridge, and gazed into the stream. If you had known them, you would have come sooner to put them to flight; for none can soothe as you can the very grief you cause.'

'Not Maria?' asked Beatrice, gently, wishing to remind him of the sister, who would be near when she would be gone.

'Not Maria.—The stream flowed on and on, without pause; my brain grew dizzy. I thought of madness. What if it were coming now, and I by a sudden impulse should cast myself into that dark water, and none should know what was become of me, and they should wait as wearily for me in my home as I waited for you—not minutes, but hours? Day would dawn, and its rays fall on the strand where I was lying dead!'

'Flavio, Flavio, these were thoughts of sin!'

'Pazienza—hear me to the end. I pictured my father running here and there, wildly asking of the crowd, where was his son?—my mother sitting at home in her wonderful quietness, which you know so well, and Maria at her feet! I fancied that my father came where I lay, and knew my face instantly, swollen, disfigured as it was. There were kind hands to help to bear me; the brothers of the Misericordia, who are never absent, they bore me on to the home of my dear ones—not my home any longer—and laid me on my mother's knees. When I saw her look of anguish, and felt her tears fall on my brow, oh! Beatrice, I woke up from that dreary vision, and resolved for her dear sake to resist the whisperings of despair.'

'Good Flavio! God will bless you; you must not speak of despair.'

'Then of hope?' cried the youth, joyfully.

'No, no—I do not understand your meaning. We are children; and to be good, dutiful children, is what we have to think of. I go hence to serve my grandfather; you abide here to be the comfort and assistance of your parents. I do not wish to hear of aught else. We are children, Annunziata—is it not so?'

'Yes, indeed, bambina mia; and Flavio is a presumptuous boy, whom the Signor Oreste would chastise deservedly, were I to make known the torment he has been to us this evening.'

'I would not have you do that,' interrupted Beatrice. 'See, we are at the door. We sup with you to-night, Flavio; but you must not keep us too late, for I would fain have a short time with my grandfather before we part for the night.'

'Do you like to come to us?' asked Flavio, generously forgetting himself.

'Oh! yes; the whole evening—that would be too sad for him!'

They entered.

The supper was over. Signor Oreste had striven in vain to make jests or to tell stories; even down the cheek of the placid Maddalena a few tears trickled; Flavio escaped from the table, his food untouched; Maria sat with her hand clasped in that of Beatrice; and little Rosina, the most unrestrained of the party, cried and consoled herself alternately. Courtenay sat, the image of silent woe.

After the breaking-up of the family, Annunziata

tarried below, to receive from Maddalena many a direction how to deal with the motherless girl. Beatrice, in the chamber above, was on her knees before her grandfather. His extreme paleness terrified her.

'How can I quit you,' she exclaimed, 'if my departure move you thus?'

Courtenay appeared unconscious of her address, as, without replying to her, he cried—

'Gerald, my son, forgive me if I sin against her and thee in letting her go hence!'

He bent down his head on his hands, and wept like a child.

'Now it will be well with him,' thought Beatrice. 'This is more natural, more harmless.'

After having given way to his emotion without restraint for a while, Courtenay looked up, regarding his grandchild with a meek air of sorrow:

'God knows how I have toiled for you! I have risen at nights when you dreamt not of it—'

'Oh! promise you will do so no more!'

'Meantime, I dare not forbid you to go out—to strive for yourself.' Courtenay could not bear to acknowledge that it was for him that she went.

'I do not doubt that we have decided wisely,' said Beatrice. 'Doubt it not for me.'

He answered but by tears. Beatrice soothed him, supported his head on her bosom, and moved not till the old man, exhausted by emotion, sank to sleep.

Annunziata, believing that the girl was engaged in a manner likely to be injurious to her own strength on the eve of her journey, could not refrain

from opening the door, and thrusting her head into the chamber. Beatrice laid her finger on her lip imploringly. Annunziata, touched by the appeal, withdrew; the noise had troubled, though not awakened Courtenay, who muttered, 'Gerald, she is safe!' In a few moments, he opened his eyes, and looked round, perplexed: 'You here! What is this? —Ah! I know now. Go, my child, to rest. I must not keep you; and how can moments or hours make me more ready to part with you? God bless you, my good, gentle, loving child!'

With a fresh agony of grief he pressed her to his bosom, then led her to the door, and closed it on her himself. Pale, silent, tearless, Beatrice stood there trembling; not till Annunziata appeared, lamp in hand, turning the light full upon her, did she attempt to move; then, deaf to mingled entreaty or rebuke, she entered her own chamber, and, like an automaton in her hands, suffered her to undress and place her in her bed.

In the morning, Courtenay had resumed the self-command which he felt owing to himself and to all concerned. He conducted his grandchild to the Countess, thanking her with the dignity in which none could at times surpass him. Beatrice saw him depart, and yet maintained that calmness with which she ever faced her deepest sorrows. She knew full well (better than any for her) that it could not last, granted but, as it were, to bear her through some difficult pass which might otherwise cost her life.

'I feel nothing now,' she thought; 'I am like marble; his grief touches me not, and I have none

of my own. Oh! this stoniness is worse than pain to me, but it is well for others; and later, when the pain comes, I shall think that worst of all.'

Mute as she was, and apparently composed, there was something in her countenance which frightened Mr. Howard, and he commended her with earnestness to Miss Lindsay's consideration.

At length the *cortège* departed, under the superintendence of the best of couriers; but the Countess and the French maid were always discomposed at the commencement of a journey. Miss Lindsay rectified all that went amiss as far as she could, and, during the somewhat dreary passage of the Apennines, strove to cheer her companions. The Countess declared herself quite as afflicted in turning her back on la bella Italia, the only country in which she existed, as Beatrice could be in quitting her only relative and friends. 'You have me, my child!' she exclaimed; 'I must be everything to you!' But afterwards she remembered that she was bound to be something to Fidelio also, the shivering little greyhound which she was taking from its genial climate, and he shared her attentions and her compassion largely with Beatrice.

CHAPTER XIII.

Que de bassesses pour parvenir!
MASSILLON.

WHILE the Countess of St. Helens was bidding farewell to la bella Italia, events were taking place in a very different part of the world, the results of which affected her movements so as to awaken no inconsiderable degree of indignation in that magnificent lady.

On a romantic part of the western coast of Scotland, on one of the loveliest days of April—days stolen, as it were, from Summer, who resents the theft by many a bluff rebuke and chilling frown coming after,—rode a horseman, who checked his steed frequently, and gazed with intense earnestness on the scenery around. Yet, certainly he was no tourist enraptured with novel loveliness spread out before him; nor did he linger like the native of the spot, whose love of the picturesque, though strong, is the weakest of the feelings which enchain him to it. Mounted on a stout, rough pony, accustomed to carry him for miles over the domain he surveyed, Maxwell looked like what he was,—the hard-working, skilful man of business—no mere

plodder or miser; the fire in his dark, deep-set eye—the frequent twitchings about his thin, compressed lips, seemed to denote a love of enterprise and speculation; and his nervous grasp of the bridle, his impatient spur, his head bent down, and his muttered thoughts, indicated a mind engaged at this hour in such pursuits. Those who best knew Maxwell, the agent, and Sir Roderic Lindsay, the proprietor of the estate, were inclined to believe that, however wide the difference between the prudent sagacity, the indefatigable industry of the one, and the reckless, thriftless dissipation of the other, the spirit of gambling was perhaps equally strong in both.

Maxwell was traversing one of the roads, beautifully wooded with oak and birch, skirting the edge of some of those arms of the sea, which form the lakes of the west of Scotland. Nearly opposite to him, as he halted on the brow of an ascent, lay a promontory, on which stood the ancient Castle of Duror. The site was so lovely, that the father of the present baronet had added to it a dwelling-house, which, with the accommodation afforded by a portion of the castle admitting of repair, constituted a stately residence; the builder proceeded to beautify it by laying out very fine pleasure-grounds, thereby impoverishing himself, and furnishing an excuse to Sir Roderic for all subsequent embarrassments.

'That old castle—that foolish fancy of my good father's, in which his son has scarcely been able to set his foot to this day—took all the ready money

out of the family, and incurred some pretty heavy mortgages on the estate into the bargain.'

Now, whether Sir Roderic had brought his conscience to that comfortable state in which it could 'credit his own lie,' or not, may remain doubtful; but Maxwell certainly knew well the falseness of such excuses, and the number of additional acres, up to the very gateway of the castle, which Sir Roderic had himself mortgaged since his father's death. If recollections such as these occasionally pressed on the Baronet, he would silence them with an angry declaration that, having no children himself, it was hard to be expected to hoard all his life for a nephew, and to get everything right which was altogether wrong when he came into the property. At other times, he would affirm that he should be heartily sorry to ruin the young fellow; nothing could be further from his intentions than to act unhandsomely by him, who was to be his heir. Maxwell was a first-rate man of business, and no doubt would put everything in order long enough before Horace should stand in his shoes; for, after all, he was himself but a young man still. And true it was that Sir Roderic's handsome face, at forty-five, bore still a wonderfully good comparison with his nephew's equally handsome, and far more refined, face at twenty. 'I believe I look like his elder brother,' was an assertion which afforded Sir Roderic infinite satisfaction. His other conviction, that his agent was a very clever man, was even more just; and any one who could have read his cogitations as he sat on his pony, surveying the scene before him,

would have been well persuaded of the fact. The chief object of the picture undoubtedly was the castle, on its picturesque tongue of land; but not very remote from it stood one possessed of interest to Maxwell, though a stranger might have pronounced it an eyesore. This was the agent's new house, built on the main land, and called the Heronry, from a tradition that the ancient heronry had occupied the same spot. A little further on, in the greenest, shadiest place, stood an unpretending little Episcopalian chapel, with its quiet churchyard lying around, and nothing but the wooded road between it and the lake; and further yet, where the trees had grouped themselves into a grove, a chimney and ascending smoke alone betrayed the existence of a dwelling, which went by the name of the English Cottage, not on account of the neatness of all its details, but because an English lady had for many years made it her residence. On this humble object Maxwell, in his present mood, bestowed not one moment's attention; yet, instead of being insignificant to him, and unallied to the train of thought which absorbed his mind, it was precisely the centre whence radiated the master-influence which, at a later period, should affect all his schemes. Had he been able now to penetrate this truth, how differently would he have shaped his course! But what the English cottage, and its lonely invalid mistress, Sybil Evelyn, could have to do with his ambitious designs, would have perplexed the acute Maxwell to discover; nay, he might have laughed the very idea to scorn.

Having contemplated the pleasant scene for some

time with an expression of countenance not at all in unison with it, Maxwell turned his pony's steps somewhat abruptly into a path leading to a rugged common. The track ceased altogether after the first ascent from the main road, and Maxwell found himself obliged to ride with somewhat more caution than he had hitherto bestowed; for the earth was here and there delved into dangerous holes by the searchers after ore, of which the face of the country gave promises never yet fulfilled in any measure likely to repay the time and trouble of the search. Some men were haunted even by the discovery of gold, while Maxwell would have been very satisfied with, and, indeed, could not altogether relinquish the idea of finding copper. But this was not the present subject of his thoughts, and he rode on till at the edge of a wood he was met by a man, who having watched there for hours, now greeted him as if the meeting were casual, and walking by his side, placed his hand on the bridle as Dot made a false step.

'Thank you, Donaldson, thank you; Dot will pick his own way better than we can pick it for him,' said Maxwell.

Donaldson did not know whether this speech signified that the agent had no great desire for his further company, but he did know that it would not suit him so to understand it; he moved on with that loitering, good-humoured sort of manner which generally distinguishes the idler from the industrious man of a community, and fell into an easy discourse in his native Gaelic, universal among the peasantry, and perfectly familiar to the agent.

'Sir Roderic still in the South—no chance have we poor Highlanders of ever looking on his face again, I suppose;—not, indeed, that we need grieve very deeply, seeing we have you, sir, as a substitute. There are some among us who desire a sight of the young laird that will be—the laird's nephew—Horace Lindsay, I think he is called—why not Roderic, or Angus, as his father was before him? However, I dare say the foreign name suits his foreign manners. I suppose that not a word of Gaelic has he ever heard, or would he understand. See, Maxwell,'—he checked the pony abruptly as he spoke, resolved to rouse the agent from his abstraction, and pointed to the glorious expanse of mountain, wood, and water lying before them: 'Do you think that in foreign parts a fairer scene than that ever met the eye?'

'No, Donaldson, I verily believe not—but here we gain level ground, and I must push on.'

Donaldson's hand was still on the bridle.

'Bide still a moment, sir,' he said, thrusting the other hand into his bosom. 'I want you to look at this.'

He pulled out a piece of ore, which Maxwell's quick eye recognised as a sample of copper, and allowed the agent to take it into his hold, though not without watching his treasure the while. Maxwell, after a close scrutiny, gave the lump back to Donaldson, gathered up his bridle, and said, composedly:

'I should take it for copper, certainly.'

'For copper,' replied Donaldson, provoked out of

his caution; 'and of the finest. They who know more than you or I, have pronounced that already.'

'Indeed,' returned Maxwell.

'Now I want to learn,' continued Donaldson, drawing nearer, 'what Sir Roderic would say to the man who came with this in his hand, and promised to show him how to make his own, as fair a mine of it as ever was worked?'

'And which, I suppose, is Sir Roderic's at this moment,' replied the agent. 'Some time since, you applied for permission to search for ore on the estate.'

'True; and much good time and some good money did I so employ; and to be up in the cold of the morning and out in the damp of the evening, when the sun was high, or when the stars only watched me—all this made the mountain-dew more necessary than it had ever been before, and spoiled me for the quiet, steady chap I used to be, as Nanny would tell you. But no luck ever attended me while I tarried on Duror's property. This was found on the land of a man poorer than he is (though I have been told he is poor enough), who neither suspects his treasure, nor could use it if he knew of its existence.'

Maxwell, whose modes of proceeding somewhat resembled that of an angler with a fish, still abstained from any great demonstration of interest.

Donaldson at length felt himself forced to adopt a more confidential tone, and continued:

'Now, what I would advise, if I may be bold enough to advise without being thought over-bold,

is this—that Duror should loosen his purse-strings, while there is any silver yet in the purse, and give it freely for this dull-faced stuff, which, you know, may soon be turned into gold. I need make no scruple of telling you what is yet a secret to the real proprietor, for I do him no harm; but I look to receive something as my thanks which would set me right, after all the waste and ruin that have come from my working in a wrong direction.'

'And what would set you right, you rogue?' asked Maxwell.

But it was impossible to prevail on the rogue, as he might justly be called, to name any terms, possessed as he was with the fear that he might fall short of what the agent contemplated as a suitable reward. Maxwell rode on with an indifference that startled him, and at last he exclaimed, with an unwilling betrayal of alarm:

'You can't doubt the excellence of the ore?'

'Not in the least,' replied Maxwell.

'Nor is it possible that you should know whence it comes.'

'I don't know, but I shall.'

'From whom, unless from me?'

'I do not intend to seek further,' said Maxwell, bending down his head, and muttering a short sentence in Donaldson's ear which astounded him, outstripping all his expectations. Maxwell read his surprise: 'Hear me,' he said, 'and don't be a fool. So much would I give, neither more nor less—and any further prevarication or altercation as to terms,

and I make none. Remember that it is perfectly useless to obtain any from Duror which I do not accede to; and further, I require you to swear that, having revealed this to me, you will never under any possible circumstances reveal it to another without my free permission.'

Donaldson looked up in the agent's face with keen scrutiny. He read the language of his keen eye, bent brow, and compressed lip, and knew that he must not temporise with him.

'Enough,' he said; 'I accept the terms.'

'And bind yourself by an oath?'

'I do,' said the man, hesitating; 'but surely I may expect—if it turn out well—'

'And if it turn out ill?' asked Maxwell, sternly.

Donaldson was silent for a moment; then glancing round, began in a low voice—

'You know old Meredith—he, who holds, as it were, a Naboth's vineyard in the middle of the laird's property. His family and his fortune have dwindled away. What could he do with the knowledge I am now giving you, otherwise than I am doing? He could not make use of it himself. A dreary while I might have to wait before I should get any reward for my pains, if I told him, or his son Fergus.'

'He has been hitherto too proud to part with the patrimony of his grandfathers,' said Maxwell, a man of few words, glad to glean from the loquacity of others, facts which might be valuable to him, and cautious of communicating any in return.

'It is my opinion that his remaining children

would be well pleased if he would put that same pride of his into his pocket, together with anything the laird would kindly add to it.'

'Before you receive anything for your information, I must be satisfied that it is correct,' observed Maxwell.

'It was at dead of night that I satisfied myself,' replied Donaldson; 'but if you will ride a little out of your way now, I can show you the very locality.'

Donaldson conducted the agent to a height, which commanded nearly the whole of Meredith's small property.

'Wretched work, here!' said Maxwell, as his eye passed from one mark of neglect to another.

'Very—the work of poverty,' replied Donaldson, briefly. 'There—carry on your eye past that ash-tree to the left: no eye can detect my work; yet did we stand side by side there, I would quickly put the point beyond a doubt.'

'We must stand side by side there,' returned Maxwell, imperatively. 'Why not now? The shades of evening are falling, and not a soul is about.'

Maxwell dismounted, tied Dot to a tree, and a few minutes' walking brought them to the place. The agent was convinced, and they parted, with an agreement that Donaldson should come to the Heronry at eight that night.

On remounting his pony, Maxwell rode more carelessly than before. Suddenly he muttered to himself—'Ten years ago, I might have been willing to have transferred this mine of wealth to Sir Roderic—but now it is too late; I cannot, I will

not resign what, scarce an hour ago, I looked on as my own.'

He rode moodily on: the whole train of thought in which he had paused to indulge, when he stood still at the turn of the road, was now changed. Then he had tried to convince himself that there was nothing of unfairness in the transactions between himself and his employer, by which, in the course of a service of twenty years' duration, not without at first frequent and solemn warnings, he had continued to supply Sir Roderic with the money the Baronet insisted on having, until every acre of the domain of Duror was mortgaged to himself. Better thus, the agent had argued, than that the Laird should have sought the means of self-indulgence elsewhere and secretly. Now, on the very verge of the estate, seemed to be cast up the means of its redemption. Could Sir Roderic know the treasure to be unearthed, —could he possess himself of the farm in which it lay—could he procure money to work the mine,—he might free himself from all his difficulties. 'But,' cried Maxwell, with triumph, 'this last obstacle would be insurmountable. I cannot be expected to furnish him with further sums, when he is so greatly my debtor. Yet, again, suppose him to be possessed of Meredith's farm, he might sell the estate to singular advantage. True; but why must I purchase that farm for him, rather than for myself? Because Meredith's indomitable pride will never let him sell it to any one less than the Laird of Duror—because I have over and over again made the attempt to purchase it for Sir Roderic, and cannot change now without future imputation on my character. I must

be careful not to offer Meredith a price that shall excite suspicion. Wretched old man! I will repay him as handsomely as I dare, but I must not seem less keen than is my wont. I may reasonably offer him something considerable, to remove what is an eyesore in the map of the estate.'

As Maxwell's mind was absorbed in these reflections, darkness had come on him before he looked for it. The road he descended was in a more unsafe state than he or Dot were aware of: in fact, it was on Meredith's property, where everything was going to rack and ruin. A step on dangerous ground, against which Dot's sagacity failed to warn him, precipitated him to the ground, hurling his unfortunate rider over the edge of the bank, several yards below it, and casting him on some sharp stones. The effect of the fall on the agent was very severe, and singular in this respect, that though he recovered the first stunning effect of the blow, and became aware where he was, and how he came there, he still found that he had lost all power of speech, as well as of motion. His hearing, however, was unimpaired; while he lay there, the dew falling on him, the sounds he heard caused him an irritation so violent, that it seemed as if he must break by force the spell which bound him; but all his efforts failed. No mental struggle could conquer the paralyzing effects of his fall, and he listened in agony to the sheep-dog's bark, the shepherd's voice, the very pattering of the descending flock. He could call none to his aid, and none came. Dot, meanwhile, scarcely injured by his mischance, having

scrambled to his feet, wandered here and there, deterred by affection, or instinct, from removing to a distance from his master. As the night grew dark, he wearied of nibbling the pasture, and came and stood by the side of Maxwell, and neighed.

CHAPTER XIV.

A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller betwixt life and death,
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect woman, nobly planned
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit still, and bright,
With something of an angel's light.

WORDSWORTH.

DONALDSON was punctual to his appointment. The agent's daughter came out to meet him with a troubled face.

'Have you brought any tidings of my father?' she asked, earnestly. 'It is very strange that he should stay out so late, and in the dark. Yet what harm can he and Dot come to?—Impossible!'

The girl strove to look reassured, then added—

'I have just sent out the farm-servants with lanterns. I will go myself with the first who returns, if he does not bring my father with him.'

She wound her plaid round her as she spoke, too uneasy not to be restless.

'Better let me go in search of him, Miss,' replied Donaldson, with ready apprehension. 'He bid me be here this evening; something out of the way

must have detained him. I know the path he would have taken after I left him.'

'I will come too,' returned Judith, eagerly.

'What good will that do?—only render your father very uneasy, if he come in while we are away, and render you unable to do anything to make him comfortable—which he will want to be, after exposure to the cold.'

'True all that you say—but I can't stay here; and I want Bevis to go too,' she added, placing her hand on the large black staghound which stood by, understanding no small part of all that she said and felt.

'I may have to go to some distance,' returned Donaldson. 'You will only hinder me—'

'Not much, and Bevis will not follow you,' answered Judith.

'He'll follow me, though, Miss,' cried a red-headed boy, suddenly emerging from a corner.

'True, Colin; go, go—lose no more time.'

Judith sat down on a bench, and leaning on a table, rested her head on her arms, covering her face with her plaid, as if she did not wish to see them depart without her.

'Now don't take on as if evil were already here,' said Janet, the cook: 'sure enough, if any ill had come to the master, I should have seen and known it ere now.'

This assurance did not weigh much with Judith, who thought less of Janet's supernatural gifts than Janet herself did. The girl rose hastily, and reached the window just in time to see the disappearance of Colin's lantern.

'I ought to have gone with them!' she exclaimed, clasping her hands. 'Oh! those wretched *oughts*—always coming behind; too late now!'

'You meant for the best, and have done for the best, my bairn,' said old Janet.

'Meant!' replied Judith, scornfully. 'Irresolution has no meaning. There—they are crossing the bit of common!' The light emerged as suddenly as it had disappeared. 'I could overtake them even now.'

But there was still the thought that her father might enter, needing her care; and the same feeling which told her that none would look for him as she would look, told her also that none would tend him as she would tend.

'Now, bide quiet,' said Janet, putting her wrinkled hand on the girl's arm. And Judith did bide, but not quiet; nor did the men, who returned soon after Donaldson's departure, bring any tidings of power to calm her.

Donaldson had set out with the prompt resolution to seek the spot where Maxwell had tied the pony to a tree, which he had left him to regain alone. As he hurried onward, he speculated with selfish keenness on what possible bearing the agent's singular delay could have on the subject on which they were to have met. Wild fancies that Maxwell might be trying to profit by his revelations, to the exclusion of himself from any share of the advantage, ran through the brain of the uneducated, but sharp-witted man. Donaldson and Colin climbed up the steep ascent, Bevis far outstripping them. From time to time they paused, listening attentively, and

searching around. During one of these pauses, they heard a horse neighing.

'Dot's neigh!' cried Colin. 'I know it well.'

A low bark from Bevis followed.

'We are on their track now,' said Donaldson, and moved on in the direction of the sound. The light of the lantern fell on the ghastly face of Maxwell, as he lay, bruised, and perishing with cold. The grey coat of Dot was perceptible even through the darkness.

Donaldson raised the injured man as well as he could, bid Colin to jump on Dot, placed the helpless Maxwell before him on the saddle, and desiring the boy to give his whole attention to supporting him there, conducted Dot down the path with the utmost care. It cost them some time to regain home. Bevis was the first to arrive there, and commenced scratching and whining for an entrance. Judith's attentive ear caught the sound; she threw the door open, and darted out, the dog leaping on her, as it were, with congratulation. A few paces onward she met the little procession, sad and silent almost as if it were a funeral one.

'My father!' exclaimed Judith, in terrible alarm.

'We found him speechless—motionless; but he lives,' cried Donaldson. 'Get him into the house. I will ride off on Dot to Fort ——, and bring you the military doctor.'

'Thanks—thanks!' cried Judith; and darting back to the house, she exlaimed—'Open the doors—bring light—bear him at once to his chamber. Hot water, Janet; blankets—brandy—anything to fight with this chill, or it will be the chill of death!'

Delighted with Donaldson's promptitude, she showed a like promptitude herself, marked by a calmness, a precision, that were wonderful. It was only when Judith had nothing to do that she was restless, agitated, desponding. Let her part be assigned,—and one of importance,—every faculty proved itself to be at her command.

Fortunately, owing to the contiguity of Fort ——, medical advice of a somewhat superior character was obtained without much lapse of time, and, instructed by Donaldson of the nature of the occurrence, Mr. Arnold, the surgeon, brought with him all most likely to be in request. Judith listened to and obeyed his instructions with an intelligence which considerably assisted him, and which he observed with surprise. Towards dawn, he prepared to depart for a few hours.

'Your father's state is precarious,' he said to Judith. 'If he be spared, to you will he owe his life even more than to me. Watch him with the greatest attention till my return.'

'When will that be?'

'At ten o'clock.'

Arnold rode away, and Judith returned to her father's couch. She was glad to find that his eyes were now closed. It had been terrible to see them open and fixed, with so little meaning in their fixedness. Arnold, on his return, thought that a favourable change had taken place.

'Try,' he said to Judith, 'not to be hoping or fearing.'

'Then give me something to do.'

'Rest. You are as white as he is—try to sleep.'

'I can't do that,' replied Judith, moving away

with a sort of aversion. 'I can watch and pray,' she added to herself.

Maxwell survived. Awful was the silence to which he was condemned for many days. During the suspension of his speech, Judith scarcely quitted him.

'I will not miss the first sound of his voice,' she inwardly exclaimed. 'If its accents fell on any other ear, they would afterwards ring on mine like a reproach, had I been voluntarily absent.'

She was rewarded for her patient waiting, for the first word Maxwell uttered was her name. She sat at his bedside, quietly reading the thirty-ninth Psalm; and she read it with deep thought of her father. Her eyes were resting on the words—'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it. Remove Thy stroke away from me; I am consumed by the blow of Thy hand'—when she heard her father murmur, 'Judith!'

She cast herself on her knees beside him, tempering her joy by the fear of agitating him. She took his hand softly in her own. He tried to speak again, but in vain, and tears like those of childhood rolled down his face. Judith, in a low tone, repeated from the Psalm she had been reading—'Spare him, that he may recover strength before he goes hence and be no more seen!'

She felt her father's hand return her pressure. Then he comprehended her.

Towards evening, Maxwell fell into a refreshing sleep. Arnold had seen him, and spoke of his well-doing with a decision he had not yet ventured to use; and Judith, placing Janet beside him, snatched

her cloak, and flew rather than walked, down the slope which led to the English Cottage.

'I can't stop to ring — I shan't startle Miss Evelyn—she must be always expecting me,' were Judith's rapid thoughts; and she passed on, and gave one little quick knock at the door of her friend's room.

'Come in, Judith, I know it is you,' said a glad voice; and the kindest, softest hand in the world was at the same time extended, and caught by Judith, who, uttering the words 'My father!' could proceed no further, but burst into tears.

'He is better, or I should not see you here,' said Miss Evelyn, in gentle, reassuring tones.

Judith smiled through her tears.

'He spoke to me—called me by my name—this morning,' she exclaimed; and, bending down her face on the arm of Miss Evelyn's chair, she indulged in a burst of emotion, which suffered no interruption from her friend. It was over before long, and raising her head, she cried—

'A pretty nurse you must think me!—very little to be trusted!'

'Nay, Judith; Mr. Arnold has paid me more than one visit, and he tells me quite a different tale.'

'Ah!' replied Judith, 'perhaps it has not been quite so bad as you might suppose from this specimen of weakness. You can't imagine, my dear friend,' she added, changing to a serious and deeply-pathetic tone, 'how very few tears I have shed till now. And now, I am half inclined to begin again. No; —I wont. Do not fear; I will consider you now, as I have had to consider him hitherto.'

'Dear Judith, it has done me no harm to see your burst of natural feeling; and it must have done you good, I am sure.'

'I really think it has!' said Judith, drawing a deep breath, and sitting in silence for a while.

'Now I must go: no time as yet to tell you all the long, long history of these hours of waiting—these days and nights of watching; but I shall, some time, come and kneel here, relate it all, and cry just as much and as long as I like. Now, good-bye; but tell me first, how you are, and that you have not been fretting yourself to death for us.'

She gazed earnestly on her friend's pallid face.

'No, I have been as well as usual,' was the patient reply.

'As ill as usual,' was Judith's mental ejaculation, as she shook her head, and, with one warm embrace, rose to depart. As she reached the door, she paused—she turned back; a Prayer-book was lying near Miss Evelyn, and she hastily sought and found the Psalm which she had been reading that morning. She put her finger on the verses which had struck her forcibly by their application, and said, in a tremulous voice—

'There—it was then he spoke to me—I shall never forget it. I like you to know, to think of this too. You are praying for me all through this trial, I am sure. Oh! what comfort in that assurance! You ask that I may be patient and gentle, I doubt not, for you know well I am neither. But ask also that I may 'have a right judgment in all things,' for I am so fearful, so dreadfully fearful, lest I may

overlook anything—make any mistake—do something quite wrong!'

The girl clasped her hands. Her face was pale with apprehension, and past emotion.

'Patience will guard you against such dangers, in a great measure, my dear child.'

'Ah! yes—I see—I am always too quick.'

With those words, Judith disappeared.

'It is wonderful, the account which Mr. Arnold gives me of her presence of mind, her sound sense, and perfect self-command. She is a rare creature. And what a noble face it is when it looks on me—all sense and feeling!'

These were Miss Evelyn's partial reflections when Judith was gone. Not that in sober matter-of-fact the Highland lassie had any remarkable beauty of person to boast of. She possessed an open countenance, with a clear, brown, hawk-like eye, a dimpled smile, a pure skin usually pale, but with a rich glow in exercise or in emotion, and hair as glossy as a raven's wing. She was somewhat low of stature, and strongly, rather than elegantly made. But activity has a certain grace of its own, and Judith's step over the heather, and the lightness and spirit with which she danced her national dances, were by no means destitute of that quality. Her voice, in speaking, was clear and sweet, as was her ringing laugh; but ear for music she had none. Her enunciation was peculiarly distinct, and she had taken considerable pains to acquire a pure and even elegant English, from a hearty desire not to disappoint Miss Evelyn, who had striven hard to endow her with it.

Thus, on the whole, the presence of Judith was

agreeable, the love she inspired was partial, and Miss Evelyn, leaning back in her arm-chair, would often gaze on her with admiring fondness, and fancy that she must be acknowledged to be attractive by even the most casual observers.

Not so her father, who, after the first scrutiny bestowed on his daughter, when she returned from the boarding-school, walked to the window, saying to himself:

'The girl is no beauty, certainly—not half so good-looking as her mother before her;—sense enough in her face—not unlike my own.'

CHAPTER XV.

Then first was noted in his eye
A gleam of native energy.
HOGG.

And female patience winning firm repose.
WORDSWORTH.

'I HAVE not been wanted, Janet?' asked Judith, in a whisper, on her return from her visit to the cottage.

'No, no; and it is well that you have had a walk. You look all the better for it.'

'Better I cannot be; I was well before. No one so strong as I am, Janet.'

'I don't know what to say to that. You look white enough sometimes.'

'Nonsense;' and Judith repeated in the old woman's ear, ''My love is like the red, red rose,' and that am I.'

Janet, who deemed her as clever as she thought herself, and as well-looking as Miss Evelyn thought her, ceded her place.

Maxwell's recovery went slowly forward from that day; but although he had regained the use of speech, he still laboured under an infirmity which is always remembered with pain by those who have experienced it; he was unable to express his wishes,

to name the thing he needed; and at times, after the vain endeavour to arrive at the word he meant by exertions of his own, or the promptings of Judith, worn out by weakness and vexation, he would melt into tears.

During these weeks of suffering and incapacity, Judith's devotion of herself to her father's service could not have been exceeded. She laid her bed on the floor by his side, she gave him his medicine and his food, she ministered to him, as her worst fears subsided, with a playfulness mingled with her tenderness which cheered him, though he was a stern man by nature, whose very presence cast a damp on the spirits of others, and discouraged the most innocent mirth; so that Judith, his only child, had never hitherto unrestrainedly displayed to him the natural fearlessness and gaiety of her temper. But now it was somewhat different. Forced to abstain from his arduous labours, he could allow himself to be amused, and perhaps was never more so (although alarm mingled with his sense of the comicality of the proceeding) than when Judith accomplished shaving him for the first time.

All the neighbours were very thoughtful of Judith and of her father during this period of anxiety; and Judith, though of a high independence of character, received kindness with grateful cordiality. More especially did her heart warm towards her poorer friends, as they pressed around with various little tokens of respectful love; love which was the merited guerdon of Judith's tender, active ministerings among them, from the time of her return to her father's house.

Maxwell gradually resumed his old train of thought. Indeed, no one could tell whether it had, or had not been interrupted, or exchanged for another better suited to the solemnity of a bed, which had so narrowly escaped being that of death. During the weary period of confinement, the sick-chamber was frequently entered by Mr. Douglas, the Episcopalian clergyman of Duror, for Maxwell was a member of his congregation. The Lairds of Duror had for generations been of the Episcopal Church; their present agent, a man of considerable ambition, had a satisfaction in being one with them on this point; and, consequently, Mr. Douglas had to thank him for marks of respect and consideration, and for the constant upholding of all his endeavours to promote the welfare of his people. Fortunately, the Presbyterian minister of Duror, Mr. Cameron, whose manse did not lie in the immediate vicinity of the Castle, was a man of remarkable friendliness and good temper, and could regard Mr. Douglas, and the favourable position which he occupied, without jealousy. He certainly had no reason to complain of any unfairness in the agent's treatment of himself; and Judith, with her father's full permission, supplied too generously the wants of his poor for him to meet her with anything but cordial affection; and on all questions which concerned his flock, she was encouraged by Mr. Douglas to seek the sanction of his advice. The latter Judith regarded almost as a second father, and his visits were replete with consolation to her. What feelings his presence and his ministrations awakened in the sick man, it was difficult to judge.

By degrees Maxwell began to show the irritability of returning vigour, and made eager attempts to direct his attention to business. Judith saw that he would not have his inquiries turned aside, and resolved to throw her whole mind into the endeavour to fulfil his present requirements. At first he was shy of her aid. He could not believe that she would be capable of comprehending, or of executing, this or that piece of business. Judith, under other circumstances, might have been impatient of the doubt, but she now with earnest assiduity won his confidence, fulfilled his injunctions with such precision, remembered with such fidelity when he himself was yet liable to forgetfulness, that in a little time she became as much his secretary, as she continued to be his nurse.

'Really, Judith,' he one day said to her, with rather a crabbed attempt at a smile, 'when I sent you to a young lady's finishing school to learn to play the piano and to paint flowers, I never hoped that you would come back a first-rate woman of business.'

Judith's eyes sparkled with delight.

'Thanks, dearest father, for the commendation, but let praise be given where praise is due; and that certainly is not to the worthy Miss Finchleys, of Liverpool. I have been carefully unlearning what I learned there, ever since I returned. I shudder when I think what a dreadful creature I should have been, if I had never found a better instructress. Believe me, every bit of good sense, or right principle, that there is in me, is owing to Miss Evelyn.'

'Not every bit, Judith, I should think. I have sometimes wondered how a young, lively girl could spend so many hours beside a sick woman's arm-chair.'

'The most profitable hours your giddy daughter ever spent,' said Judith, laughing.

This conversation was matter of surprise and thought to Maxwell afterwards.

'Miss Evelyn must really be a remarkable woman,' said he to himself. 'Thoroughly a lady, I know; of some distinction amongst her own people, I believe; good blood there, no doubt (and for this Maxwell had secretly a veneration). Her coming here was strange and fanciful, I thought; a sick woman's caprice: with that opinion, I dismissed her from my mind. I always felt that my girl would get no harm by going there, but I never imagined she would get so much positive good. I have not known nor valued my child till now. She is capable of sustaining all I can design.'

Maxwell was not an ungrateful man to those who furnished him with anything that was the object of his ardent desires; he was unobservant enough of services rendered on points indifferent to him. Now he felt warmly his obligations to Miss Evelyn and to Judith, and was desirous to recompense both; and he perceived an easy way of rewarding Judith, and calling up her brightest looks. A few words of just praise of her friend, a little more communicativeness than was customary with regard to himself, and Judith's heart overflowed with happiness. She thought her father's society highly agreeable when

he cast aside reserve, and sighed as her quick penetration told her that he never would continue to be so gentle, so sociable, so easy of approach, when he was again himself, again independent of others' care.

'But will he ever be able to dispense with assistance as he used to do?' was a mournful question which suggested itself, as she observed his altered appearance. 'Will he ever be able to discard his Judith?' she added, with a deep thrill of tenderness.

During Maxwell's confinement to his bed, Donaldson inquired after his health with constant solicitude. It seemed natural to Judith, that the person who discovered and brought her father home, should feel a peculiar interest in his progress afterwards; and the manifestation of the feeling recommended the man to her liking, although it could not banish from her memory the fact that he had never been a favourite hitherto, and that neither he nor his associates were reckoned among the well-disposed part of the community by Mr. Cameron.

'Odd that he should have come to our house by appointment,' thought Judith. 'I should not have expected him to have had any business to transact with my father.'

Judith had a turn for investigation. She saw that her father was disposed (by gratitude as for the preservation of life, she concluded) to accept Donaldson's attentions cordially, and to consent to the request which, after a while, the man proffered to be admitted to an interview. Judith led the

way to her father's chamber, and was struck by the keen look of scrutiny which Donaldson fixed on him, as if seeking to read in what state he found him. Maxwell showed some excitement, thanked Donaldson for his exertions, and told Judith she might leave them for a while. She retired with more unwillingness than she could quite account for, and even ventured to say—'You see, Donaldson, my father is not strong yet.'

'Go, go, child,' said Maxwell, with impatience; as the door closed, he took up his cheque-book, which he had bid Judith lay beside him, observing that he knew what description of thanks would suit his preserver best, and, tearing a leaf from it, held it out to Donaldson: 'There, that is what you came for. All stands as it did concerning that affair, eh?'

Donaldson was gazing at his cheque the while too intently to heed the inquiry. The sum there specified was no inconsiderable augmentation of the one first named.

'Well,' said Maxwell, reading his countenance, 'you did not pick me up for nothing, did you?' He smiled grimly; the agent's jests always seemed to have a bitter taste in his mouth. 'Now answer my question,' he added, silencing Donaldson's thoughts.

'Everything is exactly as we left it,' replied Donaldson.

'And old Meredith, the same as ever?'

'Precisely.'

'You have not sounded him as to his present feelings with regard to selling?'

'I have. He has the same averseness as ever;

but the son would be very glad if he could bring him to another way of thinking.'

'Enough—good-day, Donaldson. As my daughter told you, I am not fit for much yet. The important part of the business is transacted. And now I would advise you—that is, I desire you—to leave the country as speedily as you can, for your own sake. Remember that I have as good a knowledge of your character as I have of your secret. Good-day.'

CHAPTER XVI.

> But hushed be every thought that springs
> From out the bitterness of things.
>
> WORDSWORTH.

MAXWELL, who had been lying with closed eyes since Donaldson quitted him, leaving Judith in doubt whether he slept or mused, at length roused himself sufficiently to say:

'Do you know much of the Merediths, child?'

Judith's propensity to make herself acquainted with all the tenantry (especially the poorer) on the estate had never been discouraged by her father; he liked her, for purposes of his own, to gain popularity among them, and had consented to better their condition, in various ways, at the suggestion of her warm feelings, and lively apprehension of their wants. He did not know whether her acquaintance extended to the Merediths, who were small, independent proprietors.

'Oh, yes, father, I know them,' replied Judith, with alacrity. She was pleased with the interrogation, having sometimes doubted whether her father would approve of her holding intercourse with the family. He had looked coldly, she thought, on the old man, whose obstinacy and prejudices were stum-

bling-blocks in the paths of younger men, and whose fast approaching ruin was not likely to commend him to those who could foresee the catastrophe, and how it might have been averted.

'A stubborn old fool, the father, is he not?' continued Maxwell, still in a drowsy tone.

'Those words are too hard for my lips,' returned Judith, laughing.

'Well, you know them to be just. He is ruining his children by his stubbornness.'

'Do you think so?' said Judith, sorrowfully.

'What does the son think?—has he any more common sense than the father?'

'A great deal more, in my opinion, poor fellow. There are none left now but Fergus and Agnes; and the poor girl looks harassed and care-worn, not knowing what to wish or what to do, to soothe her father's old age, and to save her brother. I can't but feel pity for her, and that takes me there to cheer them sometimes.'

'I should be willing enough to cheer them, and to help them too, if they would be helped.'

'Dear father, that is kind.'

'There is no help for them but to sell that wretched farm, which they are making more wretched every day. I have told him that for these ten years past.'

'And Fergus sees the truth of it,' cried Judith, growing willing to disclose what she knew of the feelings and affairs of this poverty-stricken family.

'Do you mean that he would make terms, if his father would be reasonable enough to listen to any?'

'I really believe he would. Mr. Cameron has advised it.'

'And failed? You may try, Judith, if you like. Exert your powers of persuasion; I think highly of them.'

There was always a slight tone of sarcasm in Maxwell's jests or praises, yet Judith relished either from his lips; mingled with the latter, it seemed to add pungency to them—to spur her mettled spirit.

'What he half accords, he shall see I can fully deserve,' was her common feeling; and on the present occasion, she set out the following day for Meredith's farm, to reconnoitre, chiefly stimulated by a warm desire to serve—always a marked feature in her disposition,—but not without some love of victory. Delighted to be trusted and employed by her father, proud to be thought skilful enough to have a good chance of success, Judith was at this time more elated than she had ever been. Even at an earlier period, when Miss Evelyn had reminded her that she had still much anxiety to undergo, she had replied promptly—

'Yes—I know it: yet, in spite of all, I am not unhappy—I am not depressed; my spirits seem to rebound.'

'It is the sense of being useful that supports you,' replied Miss Evelyn.

'That is a favourable answer,' replied Judith. 'I must think it over, and find out whether it is too favourable.'

To-day her solitary ride afforded her a fair season for the scrutiny she had not yet found leisure to carry out. Sparing neither herself nor others, she

loved to laugh at petty foibles, and at the thousand modes in which the proudest and most circumspect of us all cannot escape affording amusement to those who, like Judith, possess a lively sense of the ridiculous. But she had a more serious purpose in view in her present self-examination. She shrewdly suspected that it was not solely the love of rendering service to others, but also a pride in being so employed—a belief that she was peculiarly ready in the performance of any office assigned to her—a little secret confidence that none else could do it half so well, which gave her this happy flutter of spirits:

'It is pleasant to feel how different my father is to me, since circumstances have made him know me better—have brought me out. I have heard him speak so scornfully of women. I was to him nothing but a little school-girl: now, he believes that I have a heart and a head worth consulting; and he believes, too, that we both alike owe a deep debt of gratitude to Miss Evelyn. Ah! out of this terrible evil good has been wrought. I am justly far happier than I was before my father's illness; only I must try not to get very conceited—I suppose I am quick. I am exceedingly vexed when I can't be quite as quick as I wish to be—make any mistake—do anything stupid, awkward. It is necessary to be very ready with my father; he is impatient, and so clever himself, he cannot tolerate dulness. It is something to win his approbation, and I have won it! Surely, he too must rejoice to find that his little daughter is not quite the nonentity he deemed her; it will soften and open his heart.'

Thus thought Judith, as she basked in the bright gleam of sunshine which had broken through the black cloud of trial. The whole landscape smiled to her eyes, and she feared no treachery, no inconstancy, in the smile.

She reached the dilapidated farmhouse, and struck at the door with her little riding-whip. A pale, blue-eyed girl opened it.

'Dear Agnes, I have long wanted to see you.'

'Indeed, Miss Judith, I am thankful that you can be spared to come here again.'

'Ah! thank God, my father is wonderfully better. And yours, Alice?'

'Deafer and more downcast than when you were here,' said the girl, glancing at the figure of an old man in the chimney-corner, with his back to them, unconscious as yet of Judith's entrance; 'but come to him. It always enlivens him to see you, and he hears your voice better than most. Mr. Cameron's, yesterday, could not reach him at all.'

'I will talk with him, certainly; but it was Fergus whom I came to see,' said Judith. 'Good-day to you, Meredith,' she continued, gaily, seating herself by him. She knew that he loved far better to be addressed by the title of his small patrimony, Auldgirth, but, in the present state of things, doubted whether it was judicious to grant him the indulgence.

'I did not use to answer to that calling, being the head of my family,' replied he, querulously.

'Forgive me, Auldgirth; you know I have had too much English training for a Highland lassie.'

'Ay, all the good old ways are going out of date.'

'Father, are you not glad to see Miss Maxwell's face again? Think how long it is since she has been sitting beside you—'

'Tired of the old man, like all the rest—'

'Nay, nay,' cried Agnes, greatly shocked. 'You have forgotten that her own father has been well-nigh dying, and she watching him day and night.'

'And was it indeed so?' said the old man, placing his hand on Judith's shoulder, and turning her to the light; looking earnestly on her, though his power of vision was nearly exhausted, and asking: 'Is she thin and pale with it?'

The tears started to Judith's eyes; but she brushed them away, and replied—

'Auldgirth, God has blessed our care, and my father will, I trust, be well and stout again; but he has had a weary while to lie on a bed of pain. However, he knows how to make the hours lighter by kindly thoughts of distant ones. He sent me here to-day to see you, for he guessed that you and I should like it, and Agnes too; and now you greet me with reproach!'

'Nay, not so bad as that, either. But was it his thought your coming, do you say? Well, who can tell what men will think of on a sick-bed?—'

'Who, indeed?' said Judith, a solemn thought passing through her mind.

'But you must tell me about your father's fall.'

This was almost too much for Judith. She described the spot and the circumstances as briefly as she could, saying: 'It was on your own ground

that it happened,' and then, turning away from the subject, exclaimed, playfully:

'When is Fergus to be married, Auldgirth? that is what I came to ask. Now, don't shake your head. I can't bear the idea of pretty Lizzie Leigh growing pale and dull with waiting too long. You must find out some way of making the young folk happy, or I must.'

The old man's countenance changed, and Agnes, in a low voice, said:

'I see Fergus coming over the brae now—if you would speak with him.'

Judith rose, took leave of Meredith, and met Fergus, who went in search of her pony. Standing beside Dot, she exchanged a few sentences with him.

'I ventured further with your father to-day, Fergus, than Agnes liked. I asked when your wedding should be.' The young man changed from red to white, and Judith proceeded, earnestly: 'I cannot bear to see things go wrong with you. Tell me plainly, can you perceive any mode of setting them right? I don't ask questions idly. I know that once you proposed to go to America with your pretty bride.'

'I did, once; but that is all over now. My father did not resent the thought—it was but a passing one—so much, as that he felt it deeply. And I myself could not resolve to leave him and Agnes, nor would Lizzie wish me to do so.'

'No, I dare say not. She is a generous girl. You all are noble-hearted. But why leave them? What is there to stay here for? and in America you

really have fair prospects. Why not all go together?'

'I have thought of that also, but dare not propose it. Moreover, although some years ago my father could have sold the farm well, there is no present offer for it.'

'Still, if there were an offer, and if his mind could be brought to it, you would not be averse?'

'No—quite the contrary.'

'Well, good-day. I must go home.' And she sprang on Dot, and rode away.

Judith explained to her father exactly the state of things at the farm. He authorized her (to her belief, under the influence of a generous desire to save a family invested with interest, both by outward circumstances and individual character, from total ruin) to make an offer for the land, which was certainly beyond what could be reasonably expected, but solely on the condition of their removal to America. This precaution, for his own sake, Maxwell easily made to appear as if devised to protect Fergus and Agnes from any further ill effects of their father's want of judgment and obstinacy.

'If Auldgirth waste this sum of money here in futile attempts to regain some of the old importance on which he prides himself, they will soon be as badly off as ever. If his son take it to a new country, it may be the making of him; and set before Auldgirth as an inevitable condition, he may assent to it.'

Judith entered into her father's views with her characteristic promptitude, and, with the guilelessness of her age and of a single heart, saw no further

than he showed her, nor supposed that there was anything beyond to see. She rode over to Auldgirth, secure of finding the old man at home; for she had warned Fergus to be absent, and Agnes to go up to Lizzie Leigh's, and take her knitting with her, and not to hurry back.

'Now I have got him all to myself, and I will not be said nay to.' She was surprised to find that her cheek burned, her heart beat, her limbs trembled. 'All this trepidation in having to encounter one old man!' She strove to laugh herself into reassurance. 'The welfare of a whole family is at stake—no wonder that I tremble. But I am certain that we are right. There cannot be two opinions about it.'

She entered. Auldgirth called out: 'Who is there?'

'Judith Maxwell, who is come to see you for a while. You are alone, and will be glad of my company.'

'I will not deny that, lassie,' replied the old man.

'I am glad to find you by yourself. I want to have some comfortable, rational talk with you, undisturbed by the whirr of Agnes' wheel, or the barking of Fergus's dogs. Bevis, here, will help rather than hinder the conference. You know, Auldgirth, they are all afraid of you, except Judith Maxwell—and she not a bit. So, I am going to talk to you of a few things which concern you greatly, and which Fergus has never mentioned to this day, I verily believe.'

'More shame for him, if he has kept back aught I should know, and left it for a stranger's lips to speak.'

'Not a stranger's, but a friend's, Auldgirth; and how can you blame him, if his silence be but the fruit of your own bidding, even though it prove to his detriment and your own?'

The old man placed his hands on his knees, and gazed straightforward with his nearly sightless eyes, wearing an air of obstinacy that would have discouraged any one less determined than Judith.

'I know now that you would speak of the sale of the estate.'

He paused; but Judith answered not.

'Why can they not be content to bury me first?'

'Oh, Auldgirth! you will not, by these cruel delays, leave them the wherewithal to do it!'

'Judith Maxwell,' replied Auldgirth, 'you say what sounds neither very kind nor very respectful to my ears.' He spoke with that dignity, that grandeur, which the most imbecile old age can at times assume, when the consideration due to it is trespassed on by youth.

Judith instantly felt the rebuke. She threw herself on her knees at the old man's side, took his hand tenderly and reverently:

'Forgive me,' she said, 'words too hasty and unbecoming. Forgive me, and grant a calm hearing, such as it suits your grey hairs to lend. I will speak with the reverence, and, believe me, Auldgirth, with not a little of the love, of a daughter.'

The old man placed his hand on her head, and said—

'Bless thee, my child! The anger you kindle can scarce be more than a hasty spark. I'll lend you a hearing as patient as may be.'

Judith began; and, with singular precision and

force, she put before Meredith all the arguments which she had arranged and rehearsed over and over again as she rode thither, yet did not give herself half the satisfaction which she had felt then, when, at once orator and auditor, her words had carried conviction with them; now they seemed to be thrown back on her by the aversion of her present listener. She made known to Meredith the sum of money which her father had empowered her to offer; she pointed out the wealth and comfort it would ensure in America; she poured forth a warm sympathy with his anguish in rising to depart; but she ventured to remind him how much more real were the evils which he incurred by remaining, than those which he encountered in departing. She turned to the open window, and said:

'You tell me yourself you can no longer discern what is beyond the lattice. The picture your mind draws of the scene will be no less faithful when ocean is between you and its reality, instead of a few feet of earth. You would fain lie by old Ailie in the grave—but would you break the hearts of Ailie's children? When you rise again to greet her, will it not be sweet to have to tell her all you relinquished, all you suffered, sooner than injure them? Think, too, that we urge you not to go hence to strangers. The voice that will welcome you is the voice that you have often told me rang most cheerily on your ear in boyhood—the joyous sailor-brother's whom you loved so well. Oh! what a happy chimney-corner would it be which held you both! And this is a dreary one, haunted by old remembrances and present cares, and whispers of self-reproach you are

too proud to breathe, and cross words to poor Agnes which your own heart gainsays, and deaf ears to Fergus. Oh! rise up, and do your best for them; it will so open your heart, that you will think little of the decree of God which has dulled your eyes and ears to the sights and sounds of earth.'

The tears streamed down the old man's face: 'Go away, I bid you, for you do half persuade me to consent.'

'I must not go away till I persuade you quite. Listen to my words, for I dare not promise that you shall ever hear them again. To-day my father sent me here; he may send me no more.'

She rose, and fetched the large family Bible, and placed it on the table by him.

'Auldgirth, you have often heard me read the words of Holy Writ; now hear these, and tell me if they do not appeal to your heart with a wonderful force of application.'

She read to him of the aged Israel's journey into Egypt to see his beloved son; she uttered the sentence—'If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.' And he felt and acknowledged that his children were all in all to him.

'For their sakes, I will do as you would have me. I cannot honestly before God say that I disbelieve in the prospect of happiness which it holds out to them. And as for me, I can't be at peace here in refusing.'

'You will be at peace there in complying—I am certain you will.'

The old man cried—'I can't be more wretched than I have been here for many a day, when none

but God has heard my heart-strings breaking.' He covered his face with his withered hands, and sobbed aloud.

'Go,' at last he said, almost sternly,—'Go. I have given my word to you.'

But Judith would not go as if dismissed in displeasure. She threw her arms around him, and mingled her tears with his, as if she had been his very child. She softened him, she soothed him, she departed with his blessing. She rode silently on with conflicting feelings, now longing to turn back and release the old man from the promise wrung from him, now rejoicing that she had broken from Fergus's neck the galling chain of penury.

'O that I could say to them, 'Take the money, and stay!' But that may not be. My father is bound to consult the interests of Duror; and the most he can say is, 'Take the money, and go.''

Judith, as she thus mused, saw Fergus at a distance, and instantly urged Dot into a canter, which brought her to his side. She held out her hand, and exclaimed breathlessly, 'Fergus, I have prevailed!'

The suddenness of her words seemed to stun him; he changed colour, gazed wildly on her.

'You don't understand me. I have been with your father—he consents.'

Fergus put his hand on Dot's mane, to support himself; he did not speak for some time, and then murmured, 'Don't think me ungrateful.'

'Oh! no, no — Lizzie wont let you be that,' cried Judith, wishing to call to his mind a thought

agreeable enough to vanquish the natural pangs which transfixed it now.

'Lizzie!' he repeated, in a tone of deep feeling, and was able to look up to her with eyes which did thank.

'It will be all for the best, Fergus—for him, and for all,' said Judith, with earnestness. 'I am certain it will.'

'That is my honest belief,' replied Fergus, in a subdued tone.

'We are not deceiving ourselves,' cried Judith, hopefully. 'He will be happier, too, than he has been for a long time past.'

'God grant it!' said Fergus, letting fall a tear.

They parted on the very spot of ground where, six weeks before, Maxwell and Donaldson had delved into the bosom of an incalculable treasure.

CHAPTER XVII.

Like two plants smiling in the dew,
By the side of the rock in the warmth of the sun,
With undivided root.

OSSIAN.

Was ever spirit that would bend
So graciously?—that could descend,
Another's need to suit,
So promptly from her lofty throne?

WORDSWORTH.

MAXWELL wished to veil the extreme satisfaction with which Judith's success filled him; and he succeeded so well, that she retired disappointed by his apparent indifference. No sooner was she gone, than he indulged himself in the exclamations, 'Admirable! excellent! She is everything I desire her to be—could contend with any difficulty—is equal to any station—impossible to be better suited in mind and character to fulfil my intentions! She little knows how she is building up her own fortunes! Now for Sir Roderic's recall!'

As Maxwell uttered these last sentences, a sudden twinge of disquietude seized him. A question forced itself on him to which he could not deafen his ear. If Judith had any idea of the edifice which she was

assisting to raise, would not her own hands be the first to pull it down? Maxwell, in spite of himself, recognised and dreaded his daughter's rectitude. He shrank into himself, resolved to work with redoubled caution.

Judith went down to the English Cottage, to get quit of her chagrin.

'You look quite tired,' said Miss Evelyn.

'I am, and my head aches,' replied Judith, throwing her riding-hat on the ground, and pressing her brow with her hand. After a short silence, she added—'I have had a hard day's work; I hope it may prove a good one—not done only to be repented of later.' She sank again into a fit of musing.

Judith, since she had been admitted into her father's confidence, had esteemed herself bound in honour not to speak of the affairs she transacted for him, or discussed with him. Thus her lips were sealed to further disclosures; yet the few words she had uttered brought some relief to her. Perhaps, also, there was a little flattering self-importance in the avowal of fatigue, the necessity for over-exertion. All such feeling, however, faded away into real pensiveness, as she sat gazing through Miss Evelyn's window into the small churchyard which was in view, and rested her eyes (it was rest) on a white marble cross which constituted the most remarkable object in it. She recalled her looks, conscious that her friend observed the direction they had taken.

'You will not credit the nature of my thoughts,' she said; 'you think I am never tired, body or

mind; that I have not the slightest idea of the happiness of repose, the prospect of which seems sometimes to afford you extreme satisfaction. I don't suppose that I shall continue to desire it long, but at this moment I do feel that it must be happier, far happier, to lie there at peace, than to toil here so uncertainly as we do, ill assured of our motive, our aim, our end.'

'What,' replied Miss Evelyn, smoothing Judith's dark hair, which had twined itself into one rich cluster; 'you envy *them?*'

'Yes.'

'It is impossible not to do so sometimes. Blessed is their tranquillity,—a precious boon, but one not accorded to us, Judith. We have to act and to suffer as soldiers and servants. They seemed solely as dear children, who played their game of innocent sportiveness, and lay down and slept.'

It was not often that Miss Evelyn spoke of the departed, though the white cross which marked their grave was intentionally in her view.

'Dear Judith,' she added, 'when I was your age, I used to indulge this train of feeling, which with you is rare: in indulging it, I fancied that I was cultivating religion. I was not only willing, but desirous to die, forgetting that there is more love for Christ in being content to labour for Him here at a distance, than in desiring to lie in His bosom. My child, His vineyard is before you. You have great vigour, though you must look for some hours of faintness.'

'Of discouragement, rather,' said Judith, sorrowfully, 'when I cannot tell whether the very labour

I have performed with diligence may not injure, rather than benefit, the plant on which I have bestowed it.'

'Why, Judith, I have occasionally wished to see you less rather than more self-confident.'

'I dare say. But you must be aware that often, through a certain exuberance of I scarce know what —something which is not mere playfulness nor absolute pride—I assume more satisfaction than I feel. Oh! my dear friend, if I could always come to you, and tell you everything—all I feel or fancy, all I do or leave undone—then I should escape perplexity, and know when I deserve praise or blame. But I foresee that my power to act thus will become more and more circumscribed; and in revealing this presentiment, I reveal that which is pressing heaviest on me.'

'Of course, Judith, you will not be able, as you mix more in the world, to discuss with me freely all that may concern others even more than yourself—all that may be intrusted to you.'

'No; and then I shall go wrong, and no one to tell me so—for I would not hear it from many.'

'When true, you should welcome the warning from any.'

'I don't remember that I welcomed my school-day scoldings—and I suppose some of them were deserved. But let me read to you; it will be very soothing.'

Judith fetched her book; it was a good old one, and she and her friend soon grew interested in it. She went home, taking by preference the path through the churchyard, and stood by the white

room, passing awhile on the two graves which it marked. When she entered her father's room, she found writing materials and a sealed letter lying before him.

'The last time that you have written for yourself, father,' she murmured.

'Yes,' said Maxwell, wearily. 'Seal that letter, and take it to the post-bag.'

Judith obeyed, hoping that her father had not suffered by her absence. Her eye fell on the superscription: it was to Sir Roderic Lindsay. When she returned, Maxwell cast a keen look on her, and said—

'I admit you to my confidence; I discuss my affairs with you. I expect that nothing which passes between us shall go further.'

'I should never have thought otherwise,' replied Judith, colouring deeply.

Her father saw her as she was; proud to be trusted, scrupulously honourable, and by nature discreet.

And whose were the graves marked by the white cross?

Ten years had passed since, in the month of June—before England poured forth her shoal of tourists, when there seemed a freshness in the very scenery beyond what it would possess when thousands of eyes were feasting on it, when various tracks were unexplored which now are beaten,—two young English pedestrians entered the village of Duror. The strong resemblance between them declared them brothers; they appeared even like twins, so much were they of an age. The day had been

and was very sultry. The travellers were slight of frame and limb, and seemed somewhat fatigued by their exertions. The youthful beauty of their exterior, their courteous lively bearing, won favour with every one with whom they exchanged a greeting. Although unable to understand or to make themselves understood by the majority of the inhabitants of the village, they received many attentions, such as the proffered draught of milk which the Highlander ever makes you welcome to, and some pressing invitations to tarry for the night. There were ominous clouds darkening the sky; but all the day long their threats had been unfulfilled, and the two youths believed that the storm would roll to a distance. They were eager to traverse the mountain-pass, and gain a little village on the other side of it; and declining with friendliness every solicitation to the contrary, after an hour's repose at the inn they took their upward way, singing cheerily as they went. The winding defile closed on them. Many a wise surmise, many a kindly look of regret and anxiety followed them, as the prognostic was uttered by many a voice, that the strangers would not cross the mountain that evening without a storm. It was three hours' good walking to the spot they had in view; they had not been gone two, when the roar and shock of the tempest began,—mountain-top answering to mountain-top—a wild bandying to and fro, as it were, of threat and scornful reply—a low muttering first, then a terrible crash like the discharge of artillery through the defile. The vivid lightning flashed on the bosom of the dark waters, and seemed to rive it.

gift of the Lord of life. A few children only (among whom was Judith Maxwell) issued from the porch, and with whispered awe stood around the resting-place prepared for the travellers, who had reached their bourn. Three days after the funeral, a carriage drove up to Mr. Douglas's door; a lady in black was helped to descend from it; she looked very pale, but composed, and sank feebly into the seat to which Mr. Douglas led her.

'I am Sybil Evelyn,' were her only words, accompanied by a look which implored to hear all without delay. She bowed down her head, while Mr. Douglas told gently what had been done. A movement checked him in his narrative; his listener had fainted.

Had Sybil Evelyn heard the ringing voices of her nephews in life within the walls of her sick-room, bidding her travel from York to the Highlands as rapidly as she had now effected the journey, she would with a patient smile have contrasted their vigorous fancies and her enfeebled frame; but in death they called her, and without fearfulness, without hesitation, she had come. She paid the cost which in a calmer moment she might have paused to count. A dangerous illness seized her; she lay long between life and death, and then slowly recovered. Mr. Douglas was a kind and vigilant friend. One day she said to him:

'I thought you would have laid me by them; but it will not be yet. I am rallying. Will you execute this for me?'

She gave him a sheet of paper, on which she had delicately traced (for she possessed the fine skill of the artist) a simple design of a cross, with the

clue to their distant friends. In their knapsacks he found a clasped volume, on the first leaf of which was written, 'The Peregrinations of Cecil and Eugene Evelyn, for the sole amusement of Aunt Sybil.' There were also many letters signed 'Sybil Evelyn.' According to their date and signature, he transmitted the sad tidings. In the pocket of each young traveller's blouse was a very small Book of Prayer, precisely similar; and in the one was written 'Cecil,' in the other 'Eugene Evelyn, from Aunt Sybil,' in the same delicate and legible handwriting. As soon as Mr. Cameron observed this circumstance, he despatched a messenger to Mr. Douglas, who on his arrival, taking up one of the books, perceived that the marker was placed at the Burial Service. Much touched, he showed the page in silence to Mr. Cameron, who immediately requested him to give a resting-place to these young strangers in his churchyard, where he might read over them the words dear and familiar to them and to their kindred. On the day of the funeral, every Christian heart in the vale responded to the appeal. When Sunday arrived, scarce an inhabitant that did not come to look on the strangers' grave; and of those within the church, scarce an eye was dry, when Mr. Douglas in the sermon spoke of the sad and singular event. It so happened that on this Sunday the Lord's Supper was celebrated, and numbers had flocked to Duror who might not otherwise have been present. The church afforded the beautiful spectacle of a whole congregation abiding under its roof, one in heart and hope, and thankful acceptance of the gracious

acquirement or natural endowment, in temper or opinions. Somewhere she could meet them, being all things to all men in the truest Christian spirit of the words. All left her elevated, not degraded; not elated by flattery, for never were there truer lips than Sybil's; but soothed and invigorated by the conviction that she could perceive something in them worth drawing out, seed capable of bringing forth good fruit, qualities deserving of encouragement and respect. None ever walked side by side with Sybil Evelyn, for however short a space, without feeling themselves urged to go a step farther in the right path than they had as yet advanced.

Then her powers of sympathy with all who wept and all who rejoiced were unlimited—inexhaustible; no care was too light to be weighed in her balance, nor so heavy as to break its chain. No perplexity was too trivial nor too difficult for her attention; she neither despised the first, nor shunned the last. 'She is such a good adviser!' was the exclamation of an humble friend; and none complained of an ill-timed, unauthorized counsel thrust on him by Sybil Evelyn. The gift of the Prophet had in full measure been accorded to her: 'The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.'

Who was there who would not willingly sit at her feet, and tell the inmost secret of the heart? Whose pride could it grieve to confess to her the soul's accusations, misgivings, needs, desires?—to lay bare the infirmities, the maladies, the throbbings, of the wounded spirit which none can bear? Who

would not feel joy heightened by its reflection on her kindly countenance?

The child would show its toy, the girl confide her love—the young mother bring her babe—the careful mistress of a family detail all her little schemes, and vexations, and satisfactions—the pale and weary widow retrace the past. But the society of Sybil Evelyn was not more highly valued and delighted in by women than by men. Well-born and well-bred, she had mixed largely with the world in a wide circle, for she had never loved a narrow one. Her vigorous understanding, extraordinary calmness of judgment, and playful wit had caused her to be sought out, when health and fortune favoured her earlier years, by all the more 'excellent spirits' of her time. Her tastes were not exclusive; whatever was good of its kind, she appreciated and relished. Yet she was not one of those formed chiefly to estimate others with justice and discernment; she possessed the creative powers which constitute genius. In painting and in music she had manifested singular excellence, liveliness of fancy and elegance of execution being in each her distinctive characteristics. Strange that the decree of Providence for a being thus gifted and thus benevolent, should be one long dreary course of disease, never terrible enough to destroy life, never tolerable enough to admit of prolonged action or enjoyment! If she could accept it, shall others rebel for her?

> Touch not the pining chord of discontent
> In the great anthem, till the mighty scroll
> Of mystery all the vision doth unroll.

It was as if Death came not near her, while

multitudes of the healthy and the thoughtless fell around, but stretched forth one of his icy fingers to paralyse her by its pressure, and limited her daily duty to 'suffer and be still.' And when a season of despondency, of misgiving, and weariness of inaction came, as come it must to a spirit not less energetic than mild,—

> Patience, to prevent
> That murmur, soon replies: 'God doth not need
> Either man's work or His own gifts: who best
> Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best; His state
> Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed,
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest.
> They also serve who only stand and wait.'

Moreover, without any diminution of humility, it was at times granted her to perceive, that scarcely under any other circumstances could she have expected to render service so extended as her present. From her fixed orbit she dispersed light, warmth, and health around. Had she mingled more unrestrictedly with the world, susceptible as she was of outward impressions, she could not with equal constancy have experienced the influences of inward grace; and had they undergone diminution, she must have become a less powerful instrument of good. Her position in life has often reminded me of the mode of treatment which sacred subjects have received at the hands of some painters, when the main light of the picture has emanated supernaturally from the holiest object in it. A radiance ever seemed to pervade the spot where she dwelt.

The severe shock of the loss of a brother, her sole earthly stay, was not sustained without great

injury to her delicate organization; but for the sake of the nephews, whose education she undertook to superintend, she continued to make many painful exertions with an unconquerable spirit of self-sacrifice. When, therefore, that mainspring of action was broken, the recoil was violent, the prostration for a time total. The seclusion of Duror, the absence of all society save Mr. Douglas's, was at first acceptable, and even beneficial. She never regained in strength or spirits the point from which she fell; but neither bodily nor mental suffering could extinguish sensibilities and sympathies warm as hers. As she gradually revived, they again demanded objects on which to expend themselves. The bright-eyed daughter of Maxwell, who had proved himself friendly and obliging to Miss Evelyn in all transactions concerning the cottage which she had chosen as a residence, soon became one of interest; while the gentle Agnes Meredith, pretty Lizzie Leigh, the high-spirited Fergus, brooking with difficulty the many mortifications which attend falling fortunes—all who welcomed kindly intercourse and the direction of a superior intellect, obtained a share of her attention.

To Judith this guidance proved an inestimable advantage. A clever, high-spirited child, she was for a period suffered to run wild, indulged by a weakly fond mother, and overlooked by a father whose thoughts were otherwise absorbed. The first she lost, and tenderly lamented. Maxwell then followed the advice of a sister, who had made a wealthy marriage in Liverpool, and sent Judith to a school there. She returned with not a little conceit and

some stubbornness, engrafted on the self-will of former years, and, moreover, with the character of being utterly unmanageable; but through all the faults and deficiencies of fifteen, Miss Evelyn's penetrating eye discovered a fine nature, and an understanding well worth cultivation; and her endeavours to assist her were greatly facilitated by the *oneness* of their religious creed, and the co-operation she could claim from Mr. Douglas. Judith soon yielded her an enthusiastic love, none the less fond because imbued with reverence. Her own words best describe the sort of influence which Miss Evelyn possessed over her. One evening, after having enjoyed what she esteemed a high privilege, the reading the Psalms of the day to her, she said, with that archness which best averted reproof if she too nearly trespassed on forbidden ground:

'I never can read this verse—'Be ye not like unto horse and mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held by the bit and bridle, lest they fall upon thee,'—without thinking of the training that was bestowed on me in your country. My aunt and my governess treated me exactly like the horse or the mule here spoken of: I suppose they were afraid of me. I never should have learned any good thing, had not you found me out, and administered a different discipline. Oh! my dear, kind friend,—my best—nay, my only instructress,—how much more like you is the preceding verse!—'I will inform thee and teach thee in the way wherein thou shalt go, and I will guide thee with mine eye.' Yes, your eye—one look of it can do more than all their force of hand could ever effect. I used to long

to say to them, as I know Dot often longs to say to my father, (who, to tell you a secret, never could ride a bit,) 'Don't pull my head so hard. Just let me alone, and see if I cannot do something of myself.''

'But could you go right, Judith, when left to self-guidance?'

'Not invariably, I confess; a pit-fall and a quagmire now and then,' laughed Judith, 'got into sometimes for the pleasure of rolling my riders in them. To speak plainly, I did not love nor respect those my aunt placed me with. I am quick in the detection of false pretensions. What they talked of teaching me, I saw they had yet to learn. They called my wildness vulgarity; I perceived that it was far less truly vulgar than their studied tameness; just as it took me not a moment to detect the contrast between their twang and your pure accent. My aim was to be quite unlike them; and in that, I fear, it was easier to succeed than in my present desire to resemble you.'

'I do not want you to be running away from nor running after any one, Judith. That is not the way to go farthest, nor to rise highest.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

Quel sujet inconnu vous trouble et vous altère?
D'où vous vient aujourd'hui cet air sombre et sévère,
Et ce visage enfin plus pâle qu'un rentier
A l'aspect d'un arrêt qui retranche un quartier?
Qui vous a pû plonger dans cette humeur chagrine?

BOILEAU.

UNDER a strong conviction that his affairs were about to come to a very disagreeable crisis, Sir Roderic Lindsay without loss of time obeyed the summons of his agent, taking leave of the Countess of St. Helens, his wife, in Italy, and promising that his nephew, Horace Lindsay, should join her in Switzerland. The Countess had a very dreary remembrance of a year passed at Duror when she first married, young, beautiful, accomplished, and athirst for pleasure and for admiration, but without prospect of title or wealth of her own; now possessed of both, she had never been prevailed on to return there, and Sir Roderic had not looked on his native castle for fifteen years. He had occasionally spent a few weeks in autumn at a small house on a moor, whither Maxwell, if he would force unwelcome details on him, was bound to repair. But now the agent commanded rather than solicited the Baronet's

presence; and Sir Roderic, who for so long a season had given himself up to selfish enjoyment, felt a twinge of compunction, the chief cause of which was best known to himself, as, on the near approach of his nephew's twenty-first birthday, he contemplated the possible discovery that he had thrown away the whole of the Duror estates, which he had always held out to Horace as his future inheritance. He no longer took refuge in the plea that he could not be expected to spare for his nephew's sake what he had not spared for his own. Sir Roderic knew of a wrong secretly, inexcusably inflicted on the orphan entrusted to his care, which forbid him to offer any less palliation for his conduct than that of making him his heir, if an inheritance yet remained.

At length came the day on which the Laird of Duror was expected; and the weather promised him so boisterous a welcome to its lone, deserted shore, that Maxwell could well believe the Baronet would greatly prefer the snug comforts the Heronry could afford, to the dilapidated grandeur of the Castle. The agent, by his zealous preparation for his Laird's reception, had almost occasioned himself a relapse: the weakness and fretfulness consequent on past illness and present confinement, probably had induced him to apply himself to trifles, of which formerly no man could be more disregardful. Even his daughter's dress did not escape his animadversion.

'That is a very ordinary gown, Judith, surely.'

'This linsey-woolsey, papa? Oh! it is capital. It was out in the rain yesterday for two hours, and to-day looks all the brighter!'

'Let me see you dressed a little more like a lady to-morrow.'

Judith moved away discomforted rather by the manner than the matter of this remark; for of her best silk dress she knew she had no need to be ashamed; while her father muttered to himself: 'Impossible to make anything of her appearance. Yet I have seen her look more tolerable than now.'

It was not without positive danger that his hardy Highlanders brought the Laird—for whom, though his very person was unknown to them, they cherished a romantic attachment—safely to land; indeed, there was scarcely a safe landing in tempestuous weather on the rocky promontory of Duror. However, the waves were surmounted by the well-manned boat, and Sir Roderic arrived at the Heronry.

'You look ill, Maxwell,' said the Baronet, too good-natured to betray the conviction which at first sight had flashed on him, that Maxwell looked not ill, but dying.

'I have been ill—very,' replied Maxwell, with an aguish shiver, 'and the storm rages. An extra log of wood and a bottle of claret, Sir Roderic, will be good for both of us. This is a dismal welcome home for you.'

Judith regarded her father with uneasiness, and disapproved of the remedy he proposed; but she knew that she must not venture on interference in the presence of their guest. Yet she glanced at the handsome stranger, a far more youthful man than she had expected to see, and felt that his courteous good-nature banished all the awe her father's anxiety had inspired. She was by nature more shy than she

willingly acknowledged to others or to herself; but now restored to ease, and finding herself for a few moments alone with Sir Roderic before dinner, she seized the opportunity of saying:

'You think that my father looks ill? He has been fearfully so, but I trusted it was past.'

Her tone of anxiety moved Sir Roderic's pity, and he immediately strove to disavow his former words:

'Oh! no,' he said. 'At first I was struck by his appearance, it is true; but I perceive now that it is past, not present, illness which has affected it. Tell me how his accident happened.—Ah! I see I distress you. Nothing could be farther from my intention. Don't attempt to speak—'

'I am afraid—I know,'—hesitated Judith: 'my father will enter, and he could not bear to find us speaking of—' She changed colour.

'Perfectly natural,' cried Sir Roderic. 'A man of vigour and determination as he is—I understand his feelings. My dear Miss Maxwell, do not pursue the subject for a moment.'

And when Maxwell entered, he found Judith listening, with no small degree of amusement, to an account of the Carnival of Rome, in which Sir Roderic had that winter been playing a tolerably conspicuous part.

'Rather silly, to be sure, this conversation sounds,' cried Judith, next day, when, with renewed mirth, she repeated it to Miss Evelyn. 'And for a man of fifty, too! But you can't think how young Sir Roderic looks and seems—or rather, did look and seem last night, for this morning he is quite an

altered man—silent, haggard. And my father, too, he has no mercy on himself or others when work has to be done. I hope, for his sake, that the Laird will soon be gone. Only think, the first night of Sir Roderic's arrival (and coming through such weather), he invited him to his study, and kept him there till midnight. I listened for my dear father's step; and, oh! of that I heard too much, for he was pacing afterwards to and fro in his chamber for an hour or more. I left them shut up now with their papers—'

Judith stopped short: the thought suddenly broke upon her, that the business which cost her father and his guest so much anxiety to transact could not be of an agreeable nature. Ought she to repeat details which led to such an inference? Miss Evelyn perceived her confusion, and the cause of it, and with delicacy turned the conversation into a new course.

CHAPTER XIX.

It is the sin that thrives, not the man. It cannot be a happiness to thrive on the stock of a great sin.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

THE day was drawing to a close, and the last rays of sunset scarcely penetrated into the little room called a study, in which the Baronet and his agent had spent some hours. On the table before them, the map of the estate lay spread: Sir Roderic's eyes were fixed on it with a dull, despairing gaze. Maxwell pushed back his chair, walked to the fire, and placed himself before it, looking down into one of its bright crevices with intense earnestness. What a contrast the two countenances presented, while the one man was surveying a document of the utmost interest, the other an object on which he bestowed a perfectly unmeaning scrutiny!

'Sir Roderic—' said Maxwell.

The Baronet started; the agent's voice sounded strangely hollow in his ear.

'You see plainly,' continued Maxwell, without moving his eyes from the spot on which he had fixed them, 'that the estate is no longer yours.' (Sir Roderic uttered an impatient groan.) 'Yet

there is one expedient by means of which I could be content that it should again become so,—one which exacts no sacrifice of honour or gratitude on either side.'

'Indeed!' exclaimed Sir Roderic, with sudden life; 'does such exist?' ('and you to reveal it?' he muttered, inwardly.)

'Your nephew—you have naturally regarded him as your heir. He is the last of your line. If he have a spark of true Highland nobility in him, he must value the inheritance of his forefathers, though he has never set foot, I believe, on his native soil, but has lived as one of the English race his father allied himself to.'

'No doubt,' murmured Sir Roderic, 'the boy will be severely disappointed. Hard enough on him this turn which things have taken!'

'Let him retrieve the disaster and the disgrace,' replied Maxwell, laying the strongest possible accent on the last term. A flush passed over his pallid face, as he continued speaking in a lower, quieter voice than before. Something of shame—something of the servility of a low-born man who unduly estimates the qualities of ancient birth and high rank —betrayed themselves in his deportment, in spite of the daring pride of his language.

'Sir Roderic, I have a daughter, beloved by every peasant on the estate: happy will they esteem the day when they look to her as the mistress of their interests. They are right. She is endowed with each quality which can best secure their welfare. I would bestow her on no man who was blind to her merits. Judith Maxwell, heiress of Duror, is

not one to go begging. But, in consideration of old associations—in forbearance for an ancient line, did Horace Lindsay seek her hand, none would rejoice more than I to see the banner of the Lindsays still wave from the Castle.'

Sir Roderic started from his seat, and took some rapid turns in the apartment; Maxwell remained as before.

'What a device!—Crafty villain!—Is it practicable?'—were the thoughts which chased each other through Sir Roderic's brain. His share of the pride of the Lindsays was very moderate, yet he felt a smarting now; but then the agent's proposal offered a cloak for his own shame, and concealed the discredit he had brought on his family. 'What,' he asked, 'could be a commoner expedient than to prop up a falling house by a wealthy marriage? What more lamentable than to hear that an ancient domain must pass away to a new name? Lindsay of Duror—who, in the next generation, will remember that it was only an alliance with the agent Maxwell which kept him in possession of his lands? There is no disgrace whatever in it—if the boy himself can be prevailed on to accept the alternative, and why not? The damsel is neither old nor ugly, nor blind, nor lame, nor marked with the small-pox. She is as sprightly a Highland lassie as ever trod the heather. I only wish I was as young again, and as free as when first I saw the Countess; I should know better where to choose. I see no reason whatever why Horace should object.

'I have but two doubts—two difficulties. I believe him to be more of an Englishman than a

Highlander—my fault again. I have left him too much to his mother's relations. Eton and Oxford have had the making of him. And next—I don't believe I have a shade of influence with him. The young fellow has not a debt in the world that I know of, although I promised to increase his allowance, and never did so. I have not that hold on him; I wish I had. To be sure, were I to reveal—what I never will so long as it is possible to avoid it—that I was forced to touch his capital, then his fancied independence would be gone.'

It must be allowed that Sir Roderic had now got to a part of the subject which he never could endure to dwell upon. He therefore broke off the train of his thoughts abruptly, and told himself it was quite time to give some reply to the ghost-like, silent Maxwell. He approached him, stopped short as he reached his side, and addressing him with an ease and cordiality at once amazing and embarrassing to the agent, and awakening his envy of the Baronet's facility; he said:

'The best step to take in the present circumstances is to fetch Horace here at once. He will be of age this autumn.'

'In August,' observed Maxwell.

'He has been too little acquainted with the place; he will see it in all its beauty. Miss Maxwell is the best person in the world to make him acquainted with it. You must perceive that your daughter's best chance—' The Baronet broke off, and cleared his throat; he recognised a frown of displeasure on Maxwell's brow. 'The most injudicious thing possible it would be to lay any part of the scheme bare

before a young man like my nephew—of his age and position;—just set him against it—make him restive, self-willed, as all young men of the day are—lovers of opposition for opposition's sake. Let him come here—learn to love Duror, see how worthy your daughter is to be its mistress, and, no doubt, without any interference on our parts, the whole thing will of itself take the course we would point out.'

'Then I am to understand that we *fully* agree as to the course which we desire that it should take?' asked Maxwell, imperatively.

'Yes,' replied the Baronet, not without a twinge of reluctance, which was instantly detected by his companion, who continued, with studied slowness:

'Then, for the present, until Mr. Lindsay shall have attained his majority, we will say—we need have no more of the unpleasant discussions which have occupied us for so many hours, Sir Roderic.'

As he finished speaking, he began to gather up and to arrange with the greatest accuracy the papers which lay scattered on the table; a proceeding which gave the Baronet to understand that they would always be perfectly ready for use if required at any future season.

'Shall we take a turn in the garden for refreshment? I see my daughter coming up the walk.'

Sir Roderic could not refuse; though he went to meet Judith, now returning from the English Cottage, with little of his usual suavity. He walked to and fro with an abstracted air, and at last, addressing himself to Maxwell, said, in somewhat an under-tone:

'If I write to-morrow to my nephew, he cannot be here under three weeks.'

'Probably longer,' answered Maxwell, drily.

'I shall disconcert Lady St. Helens' plans, I fear. She has no thought of returning to England before July.'

Maxwell made no comment on this observation.

'I shall go to my friend Macdonald to-morrow, and write from his house. I can get away for ten days at least, I reckon.'

Judith listened with surprise, for she discovered ill-humour in the Baronet's tone. He, too, began to feel shame, and shaking off at once his discomfort, addressed her with his former entertaining liveliness.

It was now Maxwell's turn to fall into an absent mood, and he soon re-entered the house.

Judith repaired to her own chamber, her curiosity considerably excited. 'Then we are to have Mr. Lindsay here! I shall rather like to see the uncle and nephew together.'

At night, Maxwell lay feeling almost more like an honest man, and a happy man, than he had since the recovery of consciousness. He had done the very utmost he could devise to serve the interests of the Lindsays without renouncing his own. He had in full view the attainment of the highest pinnacle of his ambition for his daughter. Why, then, thus self-approving, self-congratulating, as he tried to convince himself that he was, slumbers brief and restless?—and why that waking at morn

'With fevered lips and withered heart'?

CHAPTER XX.

Il y a dans quelques femmes une grandeur artificielle, un esprit éblouissant qui impose et que l'on n'estime que parce-qu'il n'est pas approfondi. Il y a dans quelques autres une grandeur simple, naturelle, indépendante du geste et de la démarche, qui a sa source dans le cœur; un mérite paisible, mais solide, accompagné de mille vertus, qu'elles ne peuvent couvrir de toute leur modestie, qui échappent et se montrent à ceux qui ont des yeux.

LA BRUYERE.

UNDER the walnut-trees at Interlaken sat a party of English travellers, who, having arrived the preceding evening, had just obtained their letters from the post, and were reading them at leisure on that lovely spot. The Countess of St. Helens, with envelopes scattered around her, was earnestly perusing their contents. Beatrice was sitting a little apart from the group; she had no tidings from her friends, and she regarded with rather a disconsolate air those whom she deemed more fortunate than herself. Anne Lindsay was standing behind a young man, on whose shoulder she leant to read with him the letter which he held, a portion of which he had already communicated to the Countess, who was as yet too much preoccupied to yield him further attention than a

pettish exclamation of: 'Nonsense, my dear Horace! Want you in Scotland at this time? Not even your uncle could be so inconsiderate. What should I do without you?' And she went on with her own letters.

'He is quite in earnest,' remarked Anne, in a low voice, to her brother.

Horace did not appear better pleased than did his aunt, but felt a little touched by the frank good-nature of Sir Roderic's address, which ended thus:

'Of course, my dear fellow, I should not break into the plans which promised you much pleasure, were it not imperatively necessary to do so. I have lately been with that unpliable man of business, Maxwell,' (the Baronet had thought it judicious to write rather from Macdonald's than from Duror,) 'and he has placed things before me in a point of view which would make me unjustifiable did I not consult your interest rather than your amusement, for which I trust you will have abundance of time hereafter. My lady must dispense with your services as best she can, for really you cannot sacrifice yourself to your attendance on her or her lap-dog.'

Horace involuntarily glanced from the paper to Beatrice, who had just withdrawn her eyes from him, for she had perceived that to watch his countenance was to read his secrets, so good an index was it of what passed within. Idle herself, she had without thought allowed herself to glance from face to face, from the Countess's to Anne's, from Anne's to Horace's, and there her attention had been caught by the extreme vexation which settled round his

mouth—the most flexible of all features in betraying every variation of humour—and the rapid language of his clear grey eye, as he looked up at his sister and down again on his letter. Horace now rose, and drawing Anne's arm within his, led her away to a spot where they might be alone. The Countess came to the end of her letter, and let it drop into her lap; she looked up, and exclaimed:

'Why, where are they gone? Come nearer, Beatrice, and tell me what Horace was saying. Something foolish and provoking, I know it was; all Sir Roderic's epistles contain that.'

'I think Mr. Lindsay spoke of being called to Scotland.'

'Think, child? Why, do you not know? You had no letters to distract you. Now, really I did not mean to bring tears into your beaux yeux. I don't believe that there is any post from Italy to-day. To-morrow you will have your share, carina.'

'Ah! perhaps that is it!' exclaimed Beatrice, cheered.

'I am sure,' said Lady St. Helens, 'I wish we could not have heard from England. What does Sir Roderic mean? I cannot spare Horace, and I will not. He is as delightful as his uncle is tormenting. He is not of age till August, and the earliest I can quit Switzerland is July. I shall tell him what answer he must give,' she ended, haughtily.

Beatrice secretly speculated whether Horace would or would not decide that point for himself.

'Don't you see,' cried Lady St. Helens, impatient of hearing no assenting voice, 'how unreasonable this is?'

'Perhaps Sir Roderic has reasons. I suppose the letter explains.'

'My dear,' replied Lady St. Helens, in a tone of sovereign contempt, 'as if Sir Roderic ever had reason on his side! If you knew him, it is the last supposition you would hazard.'

The Countess was silent for a while, but reflection could only redouble the anger kindled by a proposal which must, she considered, have no other object than her vexation and inconvenience. Before the reception of this disagreeable missive, Lady St. Helens had regarded herself and her companions with no little complacency, and anticipated much pleasure from their progress through the most fashionable places of resort in Switzerland. Her own splendid style of beauty and of dress—the youth and loveliness of Beatrice, which 'made simplicity a grace,'—the aristocratic bearing of Horace, his countenance beaming alike with intelligence and feeling;—these could be seen but to be admired. Charmed as she was with the beauty of her party, she certainly would not submit to have one of the chief objects of attraction withdrawn; Anne Lindsay's mediocrity might have been spared, even willingly, but Horace was not to be resigned. She turned to Beatrice, the only listener at hand, perhaps the only one she would have thus addressed, and poured forth such a tide of complaint and censure of Sir Roderic as Beatrice could not hear without dismay. Shocked as she was by language which right-mindedness and delicacy told her ought, under no circumstances, to escape the lips of a wife, she nevertheless felt extreme sorrow for her

impetuous friend, when she uttered the avowal that she was the most wretched and unfortunate of women.

'Of what avail are rank, or beauty, or talents—all that commands respect and admiration in every other quarter—while bound to a man who is utterly insensible to anything but his own selfish gratifications? Not a taste, not a feeling do we possess in common. His mind is uncultivated, his temper ruined by gambling. At Rome, last winter, while I was surrounded by men of every nation the most distinguished of their day, he could find no nobler pursuit than that of fox-hunting. And the money which he spent in bringing out dogs and horses! Yet he reproaches me with extravagance. He is the stingiest of mortals when giving to others is concerned; and that you know, my dear Beatrice, is what I live for. I see your look of surprise; you wonder how characters so different ever came to be united.'

'I do indeed,' replied Beatrice, with heartfelt regret.

'I suppose my beauty attracted him. Oh! he certainly was desperately in love, (I was a silly, inexperienced girl, not older than you are, Beatrice,) and I thought that would last, at least—'

'Surely, it cannot have passed away,' said Beatrice. 'Love may sleep; I do not believe it can die. Your feelings are impetuous; but then they will impel you to a generous forbearance which would melt any heart. I cannot bear to think that you, endowed with all nature and fortune can give, should have made wreck of happiness.'

'Nature—yes; but as to fortune! You don't

imagine that I was Countess of St. Helens in my own right when I married Sir Roderic? No, I have not quite so much folly as that to reproach myself with when I deplore the crowning error of my life!'

The Countess's regret and anger were too real for her to observe Beatrice's look of amazement. She rose, and sweeping by, returned to the hotel, leaving the latter at a loss to know whether she ought to follow her, and strive to minister consolation, or leave her time to recover in solitude emotions which had urged her so far beyond the bounds of good judgment and self-respect. It was not the first time that Beatrice had regretted the incautious utterance which her patroness gave to her feelings on subjects which she would have expected her to shrink from; but she had never yet spoken so plainly as now of the unhappiness of her married life. Beatrice, uncertain how to proceed, remained on the spot where the Countess had left her, trying to solve the mystery which that lady's character was becoming to her, and to read the meaning of her last words. As she sat musing on the six weeks which had elapsed since she quitted Florence, she could not refrain from the wish that she had known her patroness a little differently and better before she had set out with her.

'Surely Mr. Howard might have made me understand some points on which he left me quite in the dark. Yet he never would have placed me here, had he not confided, on the whole, in her excellence. She appreciates him: it is as delightful to hear her speak of him, as painful to listen to her scorn of Sir Roderic. She always declares her

enthusiasm for talent of every description. I hope she has a heart, too! How ungrateful of me to ask it! how kind, how lavish in her fondness has she been to me! But there has always been something strangely chilling in the intercourse between her and Miss Lindsay. I can never feel comfortable when with both, yet I am sure that Anne's heart is warm and true. Her conduct is considerate—sisterly, as Mr. Howard assured me I should find it. I am half inclined to reproach myself sometimes for feeling happier with her than with Lady St. Helens.'

Beatrice recalled certain warnings which she had received from Miss Lindsay, very briefly and delicately conveyed, and in which now she was disposed to rejoice; but she did not like the turn her thoughts had taken, and called them back to the Countess's sorrow.

'All alone—lost in thought, and that of the most perplexing nature, if one may judge by looks.' It was Anne Lindsay's voice. Beatrice started; she could not contradict her. Anne looked amused and curious: 'A batz for your thought!' she cried; and Beatrice would willingly have disclosed it; but that might not be, and she ventured no further than to say:

'I was thinking about Lady St. Helens' not having always been Lady St. Helens: I did not know it till she told me now.'

Anne appeared for the moment surprised, then answered, with a certain brusquerie, from which her manner was not always free:

'Of course not, or she would never have married Sir Roderic Lindsay.'

'I don't understand you.'

'I don't think you understand anything, and that is all very well at eighteen. But the explanation of this assertion I fancied you might have already received from the Countess herself. Why should she speak to you of the first fact, unless it were to deplore the second? Why should she long conceal from you what she publishes to all the world? Are you still really perplexed? Three words will relieve you. When she first met my uncle, she was, as you will believe, very beautiful and very clever; also very impatient to emerge from the obscurity in which poverty held her. In fact, she thought that in marrying him she did very well for herself. Several unexpected deaths made her Countess of St. Helens; then she thought she had done very ill. The marriage has not been happy—faults on both sides. I have done.'

Beatrice looked sad and serious at this revelation. Anne smiled, then said:

'Your eyes say as plainly as lips could, 'How can you smile?' In some circumstances, one must smile or cry; and I feel that your excessive simplicity moves me to one or the other. As to myself, one gets used to everything.'

'I don't think I ever could get used to everything,' replied Beatrice.

'You can't tell yet,' said Anne, quickly; then added, 'Much crying would not suit my position. My uncle, Horace, how would they like it? My aunt and I go on well enough together, and of my brother she is desperately fond—now.'

'It was grief at the idea of his going away—'

'—That called forth this burst of indignation. I knew it.'

Beatrice was silent, and looked unhappy:

'Anne, I feel as if I had done something very wrong—betrayed—'

'Nonsense, dear! You can't betray what is not concealed. I saw, in a moment, how it would be. I am very sorry that Horace is called home; but he must comply with my uncle's desire, and he will.'

Beatrice was relieved to hear this quiet tone of decision. It was pleasant to perceive Anne's calm reliance on her brother. 'If his duty is plain, he will perform it, she knows,' thought Beatrice; and she felt that she breathed again the pure atmosphere in which her childhood had been reared.

Lady St. Helens, meanwhile, had resolved to throw every obstacle in the way of Horace's departure, and to disregard the future in her anxiety to keep near her the youth whom, at this moment, it flattered her vanity to lead in her train.

To her endeavours were opposed Anne's sober sense and Horace's generosity. Had there been less good-nature in Sir Roderic's letter, his nephew might have rebelled; had there been less evident anxiety, his niece might have temporized; but in the walk the brother and sister took together, they carefully considered the matter, and their decision was made. Whatever the contrasts of their characters, they were alike determined; Anne being called obstinate, as the firmness of good-tempered people is sometimes stigmatized, and Horace headstrong, as that of fiery natures is often pronounced to be.

The Countess appeared at the table-d'hôte in the middle of the day, not only having regained her composure, but in the best of humours and the most becoming of toilettes. Every eye was turned on her, as she entered the room leaning on Horace's arm, followed by Anne and Beatrice. Seated at table, the conversation was furnished by a party just returned from the mountains, who described with enthusiasm the sights and sounds of the glorious upper world they had visited.

'Look at that face!' said Lady St. Helens, touching Horace's arm. 'Did you ever see such fresh young delight! This is anticipation—what will be the reality? How I shall enjoy realizing it! We must start for the mountains at once.'

The object to which she had directed Horace's eyes was the face of Beatrice, beaming with animation, as she listened to a description of the ascent of the Wengern Alp. He gazed certainly not with less pleasure than the Countess experienced, nor with a less lively desire to accomplish the wishes which Beatrice could not but entertain.

'Why, even Anne is enlivened by such a topic,' said the Countess.

'No one has a truer appreciation of the beauties of nature than Anne,' replied Horace, warmly.

'I am glad to hear you say so. It would spoil our party to have one blank. We must set out to-morrow—this weather is too propitious to be lost. I shall make you engage the guides this evening: I have ordered them to come to our salon.'

Horace looked embarrassed; he did not like to

hazard a remark likely to create great dissatisfaction at this moment; at least, he told himself that prudence suspended his speech, and did not choose to dwell on the fact, that departure became doubly painful, associated with the idea of Beatrice's disappointment.

Anne took his arm, after leaving the room, and said, 'Have you made known your decision?'

'No; it was not the time.'

'But it is now.'

'Dear Lady St. Helens,' said Horace, coming forward with desperation, 'you are aware that my uncle's letter obliges me to leave you.'

'I don't know what you mean,' replied Lady St. Helens, drawing him into a room where the guides were already met, the maps spread on the table, and Beatrice deep in discourse with a Swiss, who was speaking with intelligence and spirit, and pronouncing that he had devised a plan which comprehended 'tout ce qu'il y a de plus beau.'

'My dear Beatrice, this is all delightful,' said the Countess; 'but Mr. Lindsay says that he means to make it impracticable.'

Beatrice changed countenance; she could not repress her first feeling of disappointment:

'I beg your pardon,' she said. 'I have been too hasty—I suppose I misunderstood you. I thought you told me to speak to Pierre.'

'I did so. I was not aware that Mr. Lindsay meant to forsake us. I cannot attempt this or any other excursion without him.'

Beatrice laid down the map.

'Indeed, aunt,' said Anne, 'I believe the guides would take very good care of us. Other parties, too, we might fall in with.'

'I go nowhere without Horace,' replied the Countess; and she withdrew to her own room.

'This is very annoying,' said Anne; 'but how can it be helped?'

Beatrice came to her friend's side, and then addressing herself to Horace, said, earnestly:

'Don't you think, if you were to go to Lady St. Helens, to explain to her once more—to show her the letter, she would be quite satisfied?'

'She has seen the letter—I sent it to her before dinner,' returned Horace, in a tone at once vexed and indignant.

Beatrice's countenance fell. She could suggest no more. She feared to offer to go herself; it seemed presumptuous, and perhaps intrusive. Anne and Horace ought to possess more influence than she did. Anne, after a few thoughtful moments, left them.

'And you—you, too, must feel disappointed?' said Horace, turning to Beatrice.

'I should have been more disappointed, had you acted differently, for that would have grieved Anne. She told me that you had made your decision,' she gently answered.

'I think I can keep it now,' cried Horace, his face beaming with pleasure. 'How could I expect other than this from you? I have been with you a short time, it is true; but from my aunt—from Anne—I have heard much. I know—'

'Indeed, there is nothing to know; pray do not

talk of me,' said Beatrice, with looks of distress. I particularly dislike—I can't help it.'

Anne re-entered the room:

'Horace, I have given one day for you, if you will consent. I think you may. Only hear my reasons.'

Beatrice shrank back. 'Don't go away,' said Anne. She went on speaking in a low voice to her brother, and Beatrice could not avoid catching the words, 'hard on her'—'not to exasperate'—'widen the breach'—'well, then, for peace' sake.'

'Pierre,' said Horace, calling through the window to the disconsolate guide, still hanging about the house, 'promise us a fine day, and we will ride up the Wengern Alp to-morrow.'

Pierre was all smiles and promises; and the Countess presently reappeared, with some smiles also (though less sweet than they had been); and Beatrice believed that all was right because Anne had done it, and allowed herself to gaze on the Jungfrau, as it blushed at eve, with a delighted anticipation of the morrow, which was to bring her near it.

The day was true to Pierre's promise; the beauties of the ride were such as impress themselves for ever on the memory of those who are acquainted with the mountains of Switzerland—such as cannot be suggested to the imaginations of those who are not. The enjoyment of Beatrice was exquisite; Anne drank in a great deal of silent delight; the Countess, but partially restored to good-humour, having ascertained that Beatrice's charms had not the spell to break Horace's resolution to depart the next day,

would not allow him to seek their influence merely for his own amusement, and, more exigeante than ever, detained him at her bridle. The young man submitted with impatience, and had frequently to remind himself that this day was a peace-offering to Lady St. Helens. At length, however, on the descent of a precipitous and narrow path, he contrived to fall back till he found himself beside Beatrice's horse, the last of the cavalcade. Placing his hand on her bridle, he said:

'You will descend more safely, and more expeditiously, I am sure, if on foot, as I am.'

'Should I?' replied Beatrice; and, with his help, she dismounted.

They waited a few minutes for the horses to move out of their way.

'More expeditiously!' exclaimed Horace. 'Why should we wish that? The termination of these glorious scenes will be reached far too soon. You, at least, have thoroughly enjoyed this excursion, have you not?'

'Yes, indeed. I cannot believe my enjoyment will ever be exceeded in its kind; for, surely, this scenery is not to be surpassed.'

'Impossible! I fear its memory may make me gaze with too 'blank an eye' on my native mountains.'

'Oh! no, no; you will descry the same Hand there as here.'

'Thank you for that thought; I shall carry it with me, and the remembrance of your unmixed delight.'

'Unmixed!' repeated Beatrice, thoughtfully. 'I

am not sure that it is. May I ask you—I hardly know how to ask what implies a doubt, which I ought not to entertain—'

'You must ask now. I perceive that you have a doubt: give me the chance of removing it.'

'Ah! yes, I must do that. I should like to be quite sure that you have not regretted the gift of this day.'

'I have not,' replied Horace, without hesitation. 'In fact, I was not tempted to give it against my judgment—or conscience, if you will. Do you remember how you spoke yesterday of my previous decision?'

'Yes.'

'And you stopped me, when about to add something I should like to return to now. It cannot offend you. I was only going to say, that I am acquainted with the plan of your generous future. If now—by any of the unforeseen changes and chances of life—we part for longer than I anticipate, may I not tell you, that none reverence your purpose more, none will watch for your success with warmer sympathy, than I?—Are these expressions quite valueless? Do you regret that you have not again checked their utterance?'

'Oh! no,' said Beatrice. 'Kindness cannot be valueless. I meet with too much of it from all—so far beyond my deserts.'

But the mauvais pas was over. The Countess, and Anne, and Beatrice's horse were waiting. Beatrice remounted; Lady St. Helens called Horace to lengthen her stirrup; and the previous order of the day was resumed.

'However tired you are, you must come and look on the valley in the moonshine,' said Horace, at night.

Lady St. Helens cried—'How unreasonable! You are quite a Lindsay, I see.'

Anne confessed herself very sleepy, but followed her brother; and Beatrice, who thought that moonlight always rested her, came also, and

> 'As still was her look, and as still was her ee,
> As the stillness that lay on the emerald lea,
> Or the mist that sleeps on a waveless sea'—

such a sea as the lake before them. Each felt tranquillized.

'Anne,' said Horace, as they turned their steps again to the house, 'say, this is a day not to be forgotten, and not to be repented of.'

'No, indeed,' returned Anne, promptly.

'Good-night; Miss Courtenay—farewell!'

CHAPTER XXI.

Her kindness and her worth to spy,
You need but gaze on Ellen's eye.
. . . . . .
His form accorded with a mind
Lively and ardent, frank and kind.

LADY OF THE LAKE.

'THREE days have Sir Roderic Lindsay and his nephew been here, and I have not yet found time to tell Miss Evelyn what I think of them. I shall get to her now without interruption, I hope; for I believe they are all shut up in my father's room safe till afternoon. I can't quite see in Mr. Lindsay all my father sees. There is no lack of intelligence, but I should not have guessed that there was so much solidity as my father has discovered. Surely, he is very ignorant of all the common business of life. He is young, a few months older than I am, which, in fact, makes him much my junior. I cannot prevent those lines of Shakspeare running in my head. Curious that I should have been reading them to Miss Evelyn the day when he unexpectedly arrived!—Not in the least curious, and, no doubt, the very reason why they have linked themselves with him in my memory.'

And Judith, as she went on her way to the cottage, repeated to herself:

'Yet hath Sir Proteus, for that's his name,
Made use and fair advantage of his days.'

'Proteus! is that his name! I dare say he is volatile. Having known him now three days, I have not as good a claim to sum up his character as Valentine, who says—

'I knew him as myself, for from our infancy
We have conversed and spent our time together.'

Yet who could come to more erroneous conclusions than he did?

'His years but young, but his experience old.'

That was stuff. What could make Valentine fancy that his experience was old? He was just one of those home-keeping youths, who are smooth as still waters till the tide of temptation comes, and then astonish others and themselves by the desperate acts of which they are suddenly capable. I have heard my father speak of such. Still let him be Sir Proteus, as I have chanced to dub him so; but rather he whom Valentine's generous fancy drew, than the traitor his false friend proved. If Sir Proteus, there must be an absent Julia. What then? Why, if there be, I will vouch for his truth.'

She murmured the rest of the passage half aloud:

'And, in a word (for far behind his worth
Come all the praises that I now bestow),
He is complete in feature, and in mind
With all good grace to grace a gentleman.'

By this time the cottage-door was reached. Judith entered, and seated herself by her friend.

'Your father's guests seem to afford you almost as much occupation as they do him,' said Miss Evelyn, but in no voice of complaint. Judith's cheek brightened at the observation.

'True,' she replied; 'but I was determined they should not keep me from you this morning; therefore I told Mr. Lindsay that if he wanted to walk to Meredith's farm, he must call for me here. Mind, I did not tell him that he was to invade your abode —but may I? I want you to see him.'

'Certainly, my dear,' cried Miss Evelyn, shocked at a coolness of proceeding quite contrary to her ideas of courtesy; and she instantly rang, and gave orders for Mr. Lindsay's admission.

'This is just as I would have it,' said Judith, laughing. 'We have few characters to study here, and I covet the aid of your wonderful penetration to direct my own observations when I can meet with a specimen. I shall never say, 'Man delights not me, nor woman either:' both do. All creatures (those of my own race peculiarly) interest me; birds, beasts, and fishes—I love them each.'

'Better than you do my flowers,' answered Miss Evelyn, looking out of her window.

'Yes; because they do not speak or act. I dare say they think. They often look pensive.'

'You are not a flower, Judith.'

'No. What am I?'

'You are very like a hawk, in looks; but I cannot think you would pounce down on the weaker and smaller of your species.'

'I would rather soar up, and attack the eagle.'

'What! your king?'

'A robber-king, with a lamb in his talons, which I would force him to drop. My father is like a hawk. It amuses me to watch his keen eye—now on Sir Roderic, now on the nephew. I see he has more respect for, more opinion of, the younger than the older; with all Sir Roderic's readiness of discourse and knowledge of the world, I find Mr. Lindsay a thousand times more agreeable. There is often something forced in his uncle's mirth, while his own is so natural; and a levity unsuited to Sir Roderic's years, gives the impression that if he have a certain quickness, he wants all sober sense.'

'Why, Judith, he has been losing ground with you.'

Judith looked a little ashamed.

'I confess on his first visit I granted him more than I now think he deserves. Every day I care less for his conversation; it tires me. He comes from my father's room, looking dull and bewildered, exactly like a schoolboy escaped from a task he hates, and the study of which only makes him more stupid than he was before: he has a cowardly face, too, as if he were getting out before he ought, and expected to be whipped back. Then he gradually recovers the fun and frolic of a boy; and you would say he was younger than his nephew, were there not a hollow sound in all his gaiety.'

'Judith, you are describing a man grown old in the world's intercourse, and another yet new to it: that may be the chief difference.'

'I hope Mr. Lindsay will not be a second Sir Roderic when he is thirty years older.'

'If he be, he will find many to think him as delightful as you thought his uncle on first acquaintance.'

'I must not refuse him due praise for good-nature still. He is most obliging; but even there he wants dignity, and I am sure his nephew feels it. With admirable tact, he tries to put him up on his pedestal again, after he has come down with a harlequin leap. Sir Roderic appears to me afraid of Mr. Lindsay; not quite at ease with him—too anxious to conciliate. I should like a more parental air, which, surely, as an uncle and a guardian, might belong to him.'

'Perhaps Sir Roderic thinks himself a younger man than you at twenty think him.'

'Not young enough to be his nephew's playfellow!'

'I, like you, am tired of Sir Roderic: let me hear something of this nephew.'

'See him and judge for yourself first. He is already at your gate,' said Judith, removing from the window.

'Then, go out, and invite him to enter. You owe him some amends for bringing him here.'

'That I esteem a favour done to him. Ought I to do as you say? I don't wish to be too condescending. I am willing to obey your directions, for I confess I do not always know how to behave. I could not learn at school, and how can I on the mountain-tops?'

'Now, if you wish Mr. Lindsay and me to become acquainted, what ought you to do? Consider for yourself.'

'I think I know. Don't you remember how well I introduced Fergus Meredith to you?' and, laughing, she left the room, and returned in a few minutes with Horace, who considered that a visit from him to a lady who, in the immediate vicinity of the Castle, held the position of a tenant of his uncle's, was by no means out of place. He therefore met her with easy courtesy, and was surprised at the refined grace of her reception of him in return. Miss Evelyn, hearing that Horace had received his education wholly in England, judged from his age that the children of her former friends must have been his companions, and turning the conversation on English society, was glad to hear from him tidings of many she had long lost sight of, and with whom he found her to have been familiarly acquainted. Horace looked round her elegant little apartment, and told her how agreeable was the impression made on him by the tastefulness of her garden.

'We ought to feel indebted to you for the creation of this lovely spot.'

'Nature has held out great encouragement to the industry of art,' replied Miss Evelyn.

'True!' exclaimed Horace. 'What might not be done there?'

He looked towards the Castle:—'What a delightful abode it might be rendered! What a field for my uncle's activity! What scope for Lady St. Helens' taste! I come to this beautiful scenery from Switzerland, yet am not deadened to its charms by even that mighty comparison. I wrote

to my aunt, yesterday, and told her all the delight it affords me; she, who pitied me for my exile to it, what would she think of it as a residence!'

'Lady St. Helens is generally abroad, is she not?' said Judith, with secret resentment.

'She has been for two years in Italy, and she does think of Paris this winter.'

'It would not be reasonable to propose a Scotch winter immediately after those of the South,' said Miss Evelyn.

'I do not know that at any season of the year Lady St. Helens would take the same view of the attractions of this place that I do,' replied Horace. 'The uncouthness of the people, the savageness of their jargon—I acknowledge that these would materially interfere with—'

'The comfort of the grand personages whose total ignorance of the wants and feelings of these rough mountaineers materially interferes with their welfare!' exclaimed Judith, in defiance of a conviction that Miss Evelyn would not approve of this ebullition.

Horace coloured slightly, but, with perfect good-humour, replied:

'Well, Miss Maxwell, as you are good enough to act as interpreter to-day, we shall learn how to serve them better than we otherwise could.'

They rose to go; Judith lingering for a moment to whisper in Miss Evelyn's ear:

'I know you are angry with me; but when he began to talk of comfort, I could not think he was good for much.'

'He did not use the word; you put it into his

mouth, in contradiction, I believe, to his meaning; and I think he is good for a great deal.'

Judith shook her head playfully, and in a moment was to be seen walking with Bevis at her side, as if she desired no other companion.

'What a charming abode, and what a charming occupant!' cried Horace. 'How can such a person as Miss Evelyn be found here?'

'In these wilds which you utterly despise,' said Judith; (and to herself she added 'I do not see that this speech is more civil than mine was.') 'You think that she must be without a creature to exchange a word with? She has taught me English —not, of course, with the idea that I could ever become a fit companion for her cultivated mind, but just to keep up the use of speech. Then, again, there is Mr. Douglas, our clergyman. You may have the opportunity, as the English service fortunately takes place to-morrow, of hearing him—a man of education—do our beautiful Liturgy fuller justice than Miss Evelyn tells me it has been commonly her lot to hear rendered to it.'

'And you—are you of his congregation?'

'I have that privilege,' replied Judith, with reverence. 'And,' she added, pointing to the quiet churchyard they were now to traverse, 'when you enter there, your question will meet its answer. There lies the cause which brought us the happiness of Miss Evelyn's dwelling among us—her great grief, and—and springing out of it, like the flowers on those graves, our joy: good worked out of evil —the balm of this bruised state of existence.'

'Tell me more of this,' said Horace, his interest awakened as he read the inscription beneath the cross. And Judith repeated, with a depth of feeling which communicated itself to her companion, all she had to tell. Sir Roderic and Maxwell awaited them on the brow of the hill, and both remarked the earnestness of their faces as they approached, engaged in talk. An expression of complacency diffused itself over the countenance of Maxwell. Sir Roderic perceived it, and turned away with an impatience to which he could give no other vent than that of cutting off the head of a towering thistle, with this address:

'You are carrying yourself too highly, upon my word.'

The result of the walk to Meredith's farm, and of other opportunities of conversing with Horace Lindsay, whom Judith was led to consider as the future Laird of Duror, was as follows:—Judith entered Miss Evelyn's room with a face more than usually earnest.

'Lend me one of your books,' she said; 'I want to show Mr. Lindsay a passage in it—one that ought to do him a great deal of good; and I think he is capable of comprehending the truth it contains. I am sure he is.'

She took from the book-case the volume she sought.

'Massillon!' observed Miss Evelyn; 'are you going to teach him out of that?'

'Yes. He understands French, though not Gaelic. I wish I could reverse this; but I can't.

He may, in time, possess an acquisition I should so much prefer for him; but, as yet, one must be content to work with what instruments one has at hand. Yesterday, in our walk, and at other times also, he has spoken wisely and well, with good, honest emotion: I am confident he is sincere. He has a conscience towards God, as to the high responsibility of a position such as he is called to; he has a feeling for his fellow-man in a mud-floored cabin, as well as in the ceiled houses where his companions dwell.

'I ventured (I am too venturesome) to upbraid him for never having trodden the land of his forefathers till now: he was rejoicing in its beauties, glorying in them, after a manner I thought he had scarcely a right to assume. He disarmed me quite. I must repeat to you his words, but I cannot *tell* you the feeling with which they were uttered. I could not reproach any more.

''It is true,' he said, 'that this is the land of my ancestors, and that on this mountain, with you at my side, I am a Highlander; but you must not blame me because other sentiments have a place in my heart. I have not wandered among strangers: I have dwelt in the home of my mother.''

'I was particularly struck by the tone of his voice and the expression of his face,' replied Miss Evelyn. 'There is great sensibility in both.'

'Oh! my dear friend, if it exist—and I think it does—how greatly do I desire that the disposition may be productive of real, solid benefits to those who have a sacred right to them from his hand!

I do not want the beauties of our native mountains merely to waken, as they well may, the romance, the poetry of youth; I want something deep and lasting. You know how my heart is in this; and surely such sentiments as I seek here will not speak to his in vain.'

The girl rapidly turned over the leaves of the book till she arrived at the passages she alluded to, and then read, in a voice tremulous in its earnestness:

'Toute puissance vient de Dieu, et tout ce qui vient de Dieu n'est établi que pour l'utilité des hommes. Les grands seraient inutiles sur la terre s'il ne s'y trouvait des pauvres et des malheureux; ils ne doivent leur élévation qu'aux besoins publics, et loin que les peuples soient faits pour eux, ils ne sont eux-mêmes tout ce qu'ils sont que pour les peuples.

'Quelle affreuse providence, si toute la multitude des hommes n'était placée sur la terre que pour servir aux plaisirs d'un petit nombre d'heureux qui l'habitent, et qui souvent ne connaissent pas le Dieu qui les comble de bienfaits!

'Si Dieu en élève quelques-uns, c'est donc pour être l'appui et la ressource des autres. Il se décharge sur eux du soin des faibles et des petits; c'est par-là qu'ils entrent dans l'ordre des conseils de la Sagesse Eternelle!'

'Oh, how grand!' exclaimed Judith, looking up. 'Surely, if such a vocation as that be placed before him, he will press toward the mark for the prize of his calling? And he is one of the great to whom this is spoken. He might be as a prince

among his people. So far from being exaggerated as addressed to him, why, I have applied these words in their measure even to myself, when I have compared my ease, my plenty, my leisure, with the hardships, the necessities, the toils of the poor. May I not take this to him?'

'You may, indeed,' replied Miss Evelyn, much affected. 'Nor do I believe that it, or you will speak in vain.'

CHAPTER XXII.

Why sleeps the future as a snake, enrolled
Coil within coil?

WORDSWORTH.

'HERE is a new fancy of my Lady's,' exclaimed Sir Roderic, in a tone of vexation, 'and one I would quite as soon she had not taken into her head.' He tossed a letter across the breakfast-table to Horace, as Maxwell called his daughter from the room. Horace glanced his eye over it with a look of evident satisfaction.

'You, I perceive, do not agree with me,' said his uncle, as if aggrieved.

'Why, my dear uncle, I do not see that there is anything particularly annoying in this.'

'It is always annoying to me to have Lady St. Helens' company,' replied the Baronet; then added, —'when I am engaged in business of a serious character.'

'Those are just the seasons in which Anne's presence is most acceptable to me,' said Horace.

'She is a good, sensible girl—there is no denying that: I look to her to rectify any mischief your aunt may do by coming here so unexpectedly and so undesired. But there is her ladyship's suite, and

a Miss Courtenay, and half-a-dozen foreign servants besides, no doubt. However, you see that she does me the honour to say, that my stinginess need not stand in the way of her welcome. She will take all the necessary expenses of this plan on herself, and bids me send at once to Glasgow for tradespeople to make the Castle habitable. Well, that is considerate.'

'Yes, yes; and the mode of expression is merely playful, and meant to spare you any delicacy in allowing her to provide for her own reception.'

'No doubt,' said Sir Roderic, in a tone of irony. 'She knows very well it must be so if she chooses to come uninvited. I have very little ready money this year, Horace.'

Horace had heard that assertion most years.

'It seems to be all the Countess's desperate affection for you, and the glowing account you have sent her of the picturesqueness of the Highlands, that brings her here,' added the Baronet, pettishly; and his nephew could not but feel guilty. 'I am not sure that her wishes can be complied with.'

And Sir Roderic, taking up his letter, went in search of Maxwell; and, finding him, put it into his hand, making these comments during its perusal:

'Could not have been worse timed—and having refused all her life to come here when it might have done some good, it can't be allowed now.'

'I don't see that,' replied the agent, raising his eyes to Sir Roderic's face with an expression which checked the flow of his ideas. 'Why should not the Countess come here, and give as many enter-

tainments as she pleases, on the joyful occasion of Mr. Lindsay's coming of age?'

'Why? I should have thought—I see no particular use in attracting attention—in drawing forth observations, just at this time.'

'Of course, Sir Roderic,' said Maxwell, slowly, 'if there were really any danger of Mr. Lindsay's never succeeding to the inheritance after all, it would be only doubly mortifying. But as that danger does happen to be averted—' here he paused, long enough for the thought to flash through Sir Roderic's mind—'he thinks all this noise and display will but bind us faster than before—so it will—and why not? The chain cannot be riveted too tightly which is to drag us out of the pit.'

'As to any money which may be required to do this becomingly, Sir Roderic,' said Maxwell, who had walked away to his desk, 'that can easily be forthcoming.'

The Baronet muttered thanks, and then added:

'On the whole, then, you don't think this unfortunate?'

'The contrary—'

Sir Roderic took his gun, and strolled out, whistling, not for want of thought, but to rid himself of such as was very disagreeable. Unhappily, a new idea not at all less so than the old ones sprang up, producing positive pain—nay, a sensation which he almost thought must be remorse.

'No use to be tormented in this way by a mere name, and that a name borne by hundreds. Of course, it recalls the past—strange coincidences sometimes occur, but I am not a child to be

frightened by a shadow. Perhaps Horace can tell me something—and here he comes—but it would look odd to seem too curious.'

Sir Roderic hailed his nephew cheerfully—walked by his side, talking, laughing—quizzing Maxwell, whom he so greatly feared—praising Judith with an appearance of hearty liking. Horace had approached his uncle with a wish to discuss various affairs connected with the estate and the condition of the people on it, for he was just fresh from Judith's influence, but he found that he could not hold him for two minutes to the same subject.

'By-the-bye,' he cried, 'you read the Countess's letter. Who is this Miss Courtenay?—a new favourite? Does she dance on the tight or the slack rope—or what can she do?'

'She is a young lady whom my aunt intends to introduce in the musical world,' replied Horace, striving to speak without embarrassment, and in a tone which should impress his uncle with respect.

'Where did she pick her up?' Sir Roderic returned, in a manner which convicted Horace's last attempt of failure.

'Lady St. Helens met Miss Courtenay in Italy—at Florence, where she had received her education—and her friends accepted my aunt's offer to bring her to England.'

'Her friends. Oh! she has friends to fall back on!'

Horace was as desirous to escape from the subject as his uncle to pursue it.

'Her parents must be poor, half-starved wretches, to send off their child in this way.'

'She has none,' replied Horace.

'Dead, are they?' asked Sir Roderic, with an eagerness which surprised his companion; on perceiving which he dropped the subject altogether, having been too much absorbed while engaged in it, in his own interest, to remark that it possessed more than a common share of his nephew's.

'The Castle looks well from here, Horace!' he cried, suddenly pausing, and throwing himself down on the heather. Horace followed his example; and as his eye wandered over the beautiful scene, his mind dwelt on a coming hour when he might be standing at Beatrice's side on this spot. Sir Roderic's thoughts, meanwhile, were: 'If this girl should prove to be the daughter of that Gerald Courtenay, who lost to me—I fear, his all—at Baden-Baden, I am sure I shall be very glad for the Countess to help her to repair the ruin.'

How surprised would the uncle and the nephew have been, had they discovered that each was thinking of the same person! They were alike roused from their reveries by Bevis, who bounded towards them.

'Your mistress cannot be far off,' cried Sir Roderic. 'There she is, beneath us; come, let us overtake her. I consider we are fully as much indebted to her as to Maxwell for the care of the estate. The way in which she understands the people and manages them is wonderful.'

'Her father's liberality seems great,' observed Horace; 'he lets her follow out all her schemes.'

'Oh, yes!' replied Sir Roderic, muttering to himself, 'as long as they are his.'

'Miss Maxwell,' he began, as they now reached Judith's side, 'has your father told you of the horde of Sassenachs which are going to invade your territory?—for yours it is, and I know not how you will brook any interference with your absolute rule. What will you say to English countesses, and Italian songstresses, and I know not whom beside, pouring in upon us?'

'I have heard nothing of all this,' replied Judith, in a tone of surprise, and of some amusement.

'Then I must prepare you;' and Sir Roderic repeated all that the Countess proposed to do. 'It will be but civil, Horace,' he said, after the subject had been in discussion, 'for you and for me to meet the party at Edinburgh, and escort it here.'

'You think they will fear to enter these fastnesses unguarded?' asked Judith, smiling.

'I do, indeed.'

Horace accepted the proposition with alacrity, and it became a settled point.

'What will the influence of the Countess of St. Helens be?' asked Judith, on the morning of the departure of Sir Roderic and his nephew. 'For good or for evil'—with or against all I desire to see prevail?'

'I wish I had been born to a title,' she said to Miss Evelyn, as on this idle day she sat beside her.

'Well, my dear, you are pausing for me to be surprised or shocked at this extraordinary wish; but I choose to suppose that you have some excellent reason for it, and wait for you to explain yourself, without any exclamation on my part. I am too languid to make one.'

'It would give me an authority I should like to exercise. It would increase my influence. Any little good I might do would have greater effect; it would spread wider—go deeper.'

'And any little evil the same.'

'Of course.'

'And you really covet authority?'

'Yes. I should like to force people to be good and wise. You know it is not difficult to tell others how to be so; and if I were a Lady St. Helens, they would listen to me. Then, too, I could do things in my own way, and what things I pleased.'

'You are desirous of rule.'

'I desire to be independent—arbitrary. What do you think of such desires?'

'Why, I think that if you marry, it must be a silly, weak man.'

'Now there you are quite mistaken,' exclaimed Judith, surprised into earnest. 'I should be ashamed to marry a man whom it would not be an honour to obey.'

Miss Evelyn smiled: 'You have talked nonsense enough for to-day. Be content to be plain Judith Maxwell, and let her do what good she can.'

'As I can't be Miss Evelyn, I will.'

Miss Evelyn looked on the girl, bright with health and spirits, and sighed as she thought:

'How little, when I was her age, was the discipline I have needed to be discovered! Yet not one needless stroke—not one too much nor too heavy—does our Heavenly Father award. What is in store for her?'

Exactly that which shall suit her best. Fear

not, true friend, to trust her, as you have trusted yourself, to One who knows whereof we are made. Judith has somewhat more of that high-mindedness which is forbidden than it is meet for her to retain. There are laid up for her blessings of a nature she can as yet but imperfectly recognise the value of—the blessings of the mourners, of the meek, of those against whom evil is falsely spoken. Humiliation is to be endured—patience to be learned. Sore temptations—bitterest griefs are to come. And then?—

Look out, Judith, on the face of the sea thou lovest so well. Meet the fresh breeze which it braces thee to contend with. Gaze upward to the stormy sky, and downward on the troubled wave, and mark yon little bark that rides it: many a deep furrow does it fathom, and surmounts them with an elasticity like that of thine own spirit; and when the tranquil evening is come, it lies in the pleasant bay, all nature smiling round it.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Apprends-moi si je dois ou me taire ou parler?
BOILEAU.

'OF course you are aware of the grand arrival of last night,' said Judith to Miss Evelyn, having repaired to her at as early an hour as she was likely to find admittance. 'I am come to tell you all I saw of it. My father insisted on being at the Castle to receive the family; that, I dare say, was very proper—but I never understood why I was to be there, and I certainly felt myself in the way. I did not like it at all.' Judith reddened as she spoke, broke off, and resumed abruptly:

'I will tell you the whole truth. I have no mother.' (Tears sprang to her eyes.) 'I often feel the want of a woman to speak to. You are my friend—the best friend in the world—and I am resolved to profit to the full by the possession—'

'My dear child, I believe it is good for you to have me to speak to.'

Judith pressed the kind hand which had taken hers, and as each exchanged a tearful smile, continued:

'And what, after all, have I to say? Such a preface has prepared you for great things, and you

will hear the squeaking of a mouse. I have only to describe what I saw. Travelling carriages—two of them—with what I should have believed the baggage of an army would scarcely amount to; chattering foreign servants, running here and there; a very grand lady—vraiment, très-grande dame—sweeping into the hall on Mr. Lindsay's arm—dressed as I never saw any one dressed before—looking so haughty, that I immediately recognised the Countess in her own right.'

'My dear Judith, I cannot tolerate vulgar prejudice in you. Believe me, pride is of no class. Countesses may wear the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and rags may want it.'

'Nay—I don't doubt that. Something on the journey had evidently gone wrong, or else a Highland castle was by no means to her ladyship's *taste*. If you had but seen her lofty stare when Mr. Lindsay shook hands with me, with something like cordiality in his manner, saying, 'Miss Maxwell, aunt—Mr. Maxwell's daughter,' he added, seeing that she took no notice of his first words. 'Who is Mr. Maxwell?' she asked. I took courage to answer her. 'My father is Sir Roderic's agent.' I spoke as plain as I could—and that is very plain, you know; but I trembled all the while, partly because I was afraid that my father would be angry if he heard me—and he was near doing so; he came up just then, and was — oh! what I can scarcely bear to see him, and what I can't learn to be.'

'Sir Roderic brought in Miss Lindsay. I liked her look better—a sweet-tempered, sensible face, not

handsome—not like her brother, much fairer—yellowish hair, and light-blue eyes, beautiful teeth, and such an honest, pleasant smile. Don't you know that some smiles are neither? She seemed willing to be pleased with everything, only adding that she was very sleepy and tired. And I will tell you all—though my pride is pinching me now—I think. I had been foolish enough to take my bonnet off, because it hurt my head.'

'Why, that was wise, Judith.'

'Hear the consequences: it must have been for this reason that she took me for a housemaid!'

'Very stupid if she did!' cried Miss Evelyn, roused to indignation.

'Rather: she does not look clever—heavy, I expect. Sir Roderic appeared so shocked and annoyed! It must have been real—he could not have thought it worth while to affect so much vexation. I could not help being amused; but I must tell you how the mistake arose—(had it been made by the Countess, I should have reckoned it no mistake, but mere impertinence); and there is one more individual of the party to describe to you yet;—a tall, slight girl, so delicate and so beautiful, and looking more tired than any one. That was why I liked Miss Lindsay. She went up to her, and, taking both her hands, said, 'My poor Beatrice, how weary you are!' And then it was that she turned to me, saying, 'Have the goodness to take Miss Courtenay to the room prepared for her. Now go there at once, before you are asked for or wanted.' I saw the mistake in a moment; but I answered,

quietly, that I did not know the arrangements of the house, and that I would find them out. Sir Roderic came to my aid, thanking me, and saying a thousand flowery things about my kindness, and ended by introducing me to his niece, Anne. But his niece Anne was not much discomposed. She acknowledged me as Miss Maxwell, and returned again to the point of finding out Miss Courtenay's room.

'I was very glad when my father arrived at the conclusion that it was best to leave them to themselves. This morning I persuaded him that it was just what they would still prefer. I came down here in a great hurry, lest he should change his mind. I should like not to go to the Castle again while they are in it.'

'Now, Judith, you think that very spirited?'

'No, only common sense, not to go where one is not wanted.'

'What will become you best, is, to go there without affectation or singularity. Not to pay them the attention they have a right to expect from you, is just as much want of self-respect as to seek them with servility.'

'I suppose you consider that it is pride which makes me dislike to present myself where I have been treated as a menial, and vanity which makes me annoyed at the mistake?'

'Quite right,' said Miss Evelyn; 'but, joking apart, Judith, you know that it is your father's pleasure, not your own, which must chiefly decide how much you go to the Castle.'

'Well! I have escaped the Countess's levee this morning to attend yours.'

Judith might have gone up to the Castle at this early hour, without meeting any of the party of last night, except Sir Roderic and Miss Lindsay, who were strolling on the terrace.

'That is a pretty, gentle-looking girl, that Miss Courtenay, Anne,' said Sir Roderic, after he had taken a turn or two, and listened with an absent air to his niece's enthusiastic encomiums on the site of the Castle and the neighbouring coast.

'She is much more than that, uncle, as I should have expected you to perceive.'

'Oh! she has bitten you as well as my Lady? You don't commonly take the same fancies, do you?'

'I think there is generally some merit in my aunt's favourites, and Beatrice must excite every one's admiration.'

'Who is she? — not a bad-sounding name, Courtenay.'

'A very good one. She is an orphan. We found her living at Florence, with an old grandfather of the same name. You know Mr. Howard?'

'That queer fellow? Oh! yes. Well?'

'He brought her to us. She has set her heart on enabling her grandfather to return to England, by paying the debts which he incurred for his son. This is the story; and her talents will enable her to do it.'

'The son was a scapegrace, I suppose. I wonder what his name was—his Christian name, I mean.'

'I am sure I do not know. Shall I ask?'

'Oh! no; why, in the world?' cried Sir Roderic. Then abruptly changing the subject, he exclaimed: 'Anne, my dear girl, your aunt is a wonderfully clever woman. I would give all her talents to endow her with half your good sense, and a quarter of your good temper.'

'Oh! uncle, don't say that. I really believe she will be in a good humour here, if she has everything her own way.'

'But the misfortune is, her own way never is the way of any one else.'

'I don't see that it will interfere with other ways, really. She has set her heart on a few whims that will be rather amusing, and not at all mischievous. She has taken a prodigious fancy to Horace.'

'Why is that?'

'Oh! because he is so handsome and agreeable, you know; and he sings—'

'Sings, does he? I suppose she will try to make him just the conceited, accomplished ninny which she thinks a man ought to be.'

'No, no; she can't make Horace that.'

'Well, I shall hear of her absurdities soon enough. What I want to say to you, Anne, you must promise to regard. It sounds a mere trifle, but it is important. It was an awkward mistake of yours last night to take that girl for a domestic. I was quite annoyed.'

'Oh! the agent's daughter. It can't be helped, and she looked good-humoured.'

'She is an excellent girl! capital head and heart!

full of spirit, not to be daunted by any fine lady airs, unless I am much mistaken.'

'Dear uncle, I am no fine lady; it was mere stupidity on my part.'

'I dare say it was; only please to avoid for the future anything likely to give offence, and pay her what attention you can. Come, you say you are not proud, so don't look astonished. Let her be at the Castle as much as possible. I don't dare to breathe a word of this to the Countess, for fear she should run exactly counter to all I wish. But I tell you, Anne,'—and here Sir Roderic dropped his voice,—'it is of the utmost importance to me, and, what you will care more for, to Horace, that we should stand well with that man, Maxwell. Now you need not repeat this to Horace. He is much more likely to act as I would have him, if it is not made a question of self-interest, than if it is.'

'Very true,' observed Anne.

'Well, enough is said,' returned Sir Roderic. 'And there are Maxwell and his daughter passing the gateway at this moment. I wonder if her ladyship will show—eh, Anne?'

'I can't tell, but I will go and prepare her, if you like,' said Anne, entering the house.

'It must be a harder heart than mine,' thought Sir Roderic, lingering for a moment before he went forward to welcome Maxwell and his daughter, 'that could banish poor Beatrice from Duror, just as she is about to attempt the recovery of that independence of which I suspect I helped to rob her. Yet I wish she had remained another year in Italy.'

But the Baronet dismissed the vain desire, remembering also that to expel the Countess's reigning favourite was nothing less than to expel the Countess herself,—an act so extreme that it would stamp him as a madman; unless he chose to account for the proceeding by the disclosure of designs which he had many inducements to keep secret. He therefore satisfied himself by greeting Judith in a manner which relieved her of all fear of meeting with any treatment at the Castle that could offend her dignity.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Qu'il est difficile d'être content de quelqu'un!
LA BRUYERE.

IN fact, Mr. Maxwell would not, by any little finesse on Judith's part, be deterred from going up to the Castle, soon after she returned from Miss Evelyn; and Lady St. Helens had learned that he was the person to whom she must apply for the furtherance of all her wishes. She was, therefore, very gracious in her reception of him, but did not bestow much attention on the little dark girl she saw at his side, till Maxwell drew his daughter forward, saying:

'This is my right hand, my Lady. All you require will be far more promptly understood and more dexterously executed by her than by me. She is also absolute queen here; not a creature but would fly at her bidding.'

Judith shrank back from the now flattering address of the Countess.

'Mr. Maxwell,' continued Lady St. Helens, thinking the girl shy and awkward in spite of her father's praises, 'have I rightly understood from Sir Roderic that Mr. Lindsay's coming of age is to

be celebrated here on the fifth of August? Is that the day? Of course, I leave to you all the rejoicings among the natives which will take place. I shall like to see the lake covered with boats, and the grounds filled with people. You must manage, my dear Miss Maxwell, that as many of them as possible shall appear in costume. I shall insist with Horace himself, on his adopting the national garb at once. He will look splendid in it, won't he, Mr. Maxwell? Then Sir Roderic wants a ball in the evening. Now, I don't intend anything so tiresome and commonplace. I should have the tunes of those Scotch reels running in my ears all the rest of the week. Barbarous sounds! Oh! that piper last night! What I suffered! and my poor Beatrice—her Italian ears—'

Now, Judith, who disliked all music except that of the bagpipes, and thought no dance equal to a reel, felt greatly indignant, and very sure that she never could tolerate the Countess or her protégée; but Maxwell smiled, and bowed, and smiled again.

'I shall fill the Castle with friends of my own—civilized people—whom I saw during my few days in London; and Sir Roderic may catch some of his friends before they hurry to the Moors; that is his affair—he must consider where they are all to be put up when they arrive; but he and Miss Lindsay will arrange all that perfectly well.'

'Your ladyship will find the accommodation afforded by the Castle extensive—the four turrets—'

'Oh! yes—owls' houses they look like; they must be made habitable. But all that is, as I said, ordinary straightforward work, and can be done by

ordinary straightforward people. What I want to consult you about is the theatre.'

Maxwell looked amazed, Judith very curious.

'Ah! I frighten you, I see. Scrupulous, I dare say—I know you have rigid ideas here. I shall shock the natives.'

'Not at all,' interrupted Maxwell, anxious to disclaim all scruples.

'Then listen. I am very moderate in my requirements—nothing to alarm you—the simplest arrangements in the world will suffice. Come with me into the great barrack, called a hall, which we crossed yesterday.'

And Lady St. Helens, followed by Maxwell and his daughter, proceeded to the hall.

'You see, there are doors at that end,' continued the lady, with inexhaustible flow of speech. 'We must have a platform for that portion of the room, and a curtain—that is indispensable—and lights—standing lights—two rows of them: do you understand, Miss Maxwell? Be so good as to take a sheet of paper and a pencil, and make a list of all I shall require. Come to-morrow morning, and you shall write for the things according to the addresses I shall give you.'

Maxwell began to fear that he had made a mistake in putting Judith forward.

'The whole of that end of the room,' said Lady St. Helens, 'must have draperies—rose-colour and white, I think: my hair is dark, so is Miss Courtenay's. I shall consult Gabrielle. My grand piano will stand on the platform; I shall preside at it. Miss Courtenay, Mr. Lindsay' (Judith felt herself

... and the rest of the performers, they will be ... on either side. No attempt to dress in ... or to act; bad taste—sure to be ridiculous ... the whole opera, merely the best scenes. ... is my idea of the evening; and will you ... good' (and the lady was all smiles again) 'as ... the people to work as fast as possible, to ... all that I have enumerated. Benches, too, ... from this spot where we stand, to the ... must be filled with seats. Three weeks ... ample time, I am sure, for you. No one ... have to encounter such fatigue as I, the poor ... My corps dramatique incomplete to the ... that wretch, De Courcy, my *basso*, ... arrive till the third. You are amazed at ... -everybody is. Now, adieu.'

'My dear father,' exclaimed Judith, as they ... the Castle, 'did you ever hear any one talk ... Helena talks? I should have liked a ball ... defeat her opera; but some amusement can ... from her absurdities, no doubt. I don't ... disposed to be the slave of the lamp or ... Is it your desire that I should be so?'

... already dubious as to the good judg... his proceedings of this morning, now ... raised his head, (habitually bent for... looked proudly round, and said: 'Certainly ...

... Judith, more than once, as she walked home... to herself, with an indignation not ... 'Miss Courtenay, Mr. Lindsay, ... of the performers.' And he can endure

The next morning, Maxwell repaired alone to the Castle to transact with the Countess whatever business she thought necessary; and he returned with an invitation to himself and to his daughter to dine there that day. Several of Lady St. Helens' friends were arrived, and some of Sir Roderic's. By a little management on the part of the Baronet, it fell to Horace to take Judith in to dinner; but by a little management on his own part, he also obtained a seat beside Beatrice. Judith now saw her for the first time since her glimpse of her, pale and tired, on the evening of her arrival, and was at once surprised and delighted by her beauty. But the conversation soon turned chiefly on the opera and on music—subjects which possessed no charms whatever for Judith. When appealed to, she answered bluntly:

'I know nothing of music; and when I hear it, I dislike it.'

'Your assertion rather surprises me,' replied Horace; 'because, when I was staying with you, I remember being very much struck by the manner in which your school (for I know it is especially yours) joined in the Church service; and surely I am not mistaken in saying, that you played the organ yourself.'

'All that is quite true, and the subject is one of peculiar interest and pleasure to me, and yet has small connexion with love or knowledge of music. I do not teach the children to sing.'

'Who does?'

'Miss Evelyn.'

'Your most agreeable Miss Evelyn?'

[illegible] on the part of Horace brought [illegible] to Judith's lips; and at that [illegible] her mother caught a glimpse of her beaming countenance. Hitherto she had felt, she knew [illegible] not altogether content with her neighbour's [illegible]; now she proceeded to speak with [illegible]

'She is a most accomplished musician, just [illegible] everything else. And her energy [illegible] wonderful? Twice in the week she [illegible] round her, and I verily believe [illegible] have organist herself, which must [illegible] had not the fear of that made me [illegible] however it was, to acquire just skill [illegible]'

'[illegible] your friend has stood instead of [illegible], and I promise Miss Courtenay, [illegible] she shall be gratified by the simple [illegible]'

The [illegible] was spent round the piano, [illegible] unpacked that morning. Judith [illegible] which she supposed herself to enter[illegible] confirmed by that which she now [illegible] She was previously unacquainted with the [illegible] operatic singing, and certainly [illegible] While Judith recognised to the [illegible] beauty, her voice, to others fasci[illegible] was powerless over her; and she was fast [illegible] for Horace, and all hopes of ever [illegible] the manly part she had assigned [illegible] she beheld him content to spend two [illegible] manner which she deemed so frivolous.

The better he sang, the less she esteemed him. Not a word had he addressed to her on any of the subjects which, when he was at Duror alone, had seemed of mutual interest to them. That he should improve the condition of the people, ever take the lead as their protector, now seemed to her incredible. She began to feel quite out of her element among people whom she could not understand. She was shy; but as hers was a shyness somewhat tinctured with pride, she was unwilling to acknowledge it even to herself. She perceived that, as she sat there, she was wholly insignificant, and yet she felt that she was not really so. She suspected that it was a sort of pity which made Sir Roderic seat himself beside her; and she did not like to show gratitude by readiness to be pleased. She wished herself at home again, and when Anne Lindsay tried to lead her into conversation, baffled her by resolutely replying in monosyllables.

Absorbed in her own thoughts, Judith was not prepared for a sudden attack made on her by her father, as they returned home, and not disposed to take it very meekly.

'Strange, Judith, that after all the cost and trouble of your education, you should be unable, as I heard you assure Sir Roderic that you are, to play the simplest tune on the piano. You will feel this ignorance painfully in good society.'

'Why, really, father, music has not been an expensive item in my education. I cannot play or sing without ear or voice; and I did not wish to learn to be only like a self-acting piano. As to

those Italian screams I heard to-night, I have not the slightest desire to utter them.'

'I am assured that Lady St. Helens, and the young lady for whom she designs the opera, are first-rate musicians—admirable performers.'

'Well, dearest father, so would I be both, had nature qualified me for such excellences,' replied Judith, conquering her petulance, but not relieved from certain feelings of vexation.

CHAPTER XXV.

Et je serai le seul qui ne pourrai rien dire?
On sera ridicule, et je n'oserai rire?

BOILEAU.

JUDITH, more occupied at the Castle than she had any desire to be, was obliged to let two or three days elapse without the relief of a discourse with Miss Evelyn. At length, however, she made her escape to the Cottage, and almost her first words were:

'I can't tell you how stupid I am when with these great people; and this vexes my father, and it vexes me, I will not pretend solely on his account; a little on my own also. I am not stupid when I am with you. I am not frightened and tongue-tied here. I know very well that you are superior to them in every possible way; and yet you do not despise me, and think nothing of me, as they do.'

'My dear Judith, I cannot believe that they despise you, unless there are some very silly, unworthy people among them—daws in peacocks' feathers; but that they do not think so much about you as the one old woman whom you delight and amuse, I can easily believe. They don't know you

—how should they? especially as you choose to wear a veil of pride and reserve, which lets *not* a ray of light come through.'

'Reserve? You would not have me thrust on them, unasked, all the little opinions and sentiments which you like to hear?'

'Certainly not.'

'Pride? It is their pride that crushes me, quite down. But, like my own native heather, I have a constitutional springiness which enables me to rise up again from the heaviest tread.'

'I will answer for it, Judith, you have as much repellent pride as they have aggressive.'

'Some armour, of course, it is necessary to wear.'

'Why?'

'Oh! there are shafts of all sorts flying round, some of them poisonous enough, I dare say,' replied Judith, laughing. 'And then, you know, it does exhaust all my patience to go there, and hear nothing but singing from morning till night.'

'But surely every one does not sing?'

'No,' said Judith, a little ashamed to find out that it was chiefly Horace Lindsay's singing that annoyed her. 'Miss Lindsay, to be sure, seems almost as tired of it as myself; but out of good-nature she has promised to take a part, if Lady St Helens can find no one better. And Lady Rhoda Marlowe, she does not sing, certainly!—Miss Courtenay is a lovely creature, but I think she is rather insipid. Perhaps I might like her better if I heard her talk, but at present I only hear her sing. To tell you the real truth, it puts me out of all patience to see the change in Mr. Lindsay!'

Judith, though she volunteered this frank confession, could not make it without colouring a little. 'I had fancied, you encouraged me to fancy, that there was something more in him than this. I who have so deeply at heart the interests of these neglected people, and who have learned that under all Sir Roderic's good-nature there is a deep-rooted selfishness, and a total disregard of them—I thought that the warm feelings and energy of youth might dispose Mr. Lindsay to exertions in their behalf. And now, I assure you, there are matters that I have meditated on and planned, and thought that I might usefully and laudably communicate to him (as I used to do in his first visit), and I have gone up to the Castle with my head and heart full of them, and found him wearing away time at the piano—'

'With Miss Courtenay?' asked Miss Evelyn, strenuously avoiding a tone of voice which might betray her own suspicion.

'Yes, and his sister or his aunt. Then it has seemed out of place to speak of anything worth speaking about in the midst of so much trifling, and I have turned away in silence and gone home again. I would not go any more, at least much less frequently than hitherto, if my father did not constrain me to it. No one wants me there, and I want no one.'

'Well, Judith, perhaps these little mortifications are good discipline for you. You like sitting here at my footstool, saying just what you please,—flattered, spoiled—'

'Flattered,' interrupted Judith, eagerly, fixing her piercing eyes on her friend; 'then you do flatter me?'

Miss Evelyn watched her with a smile.

'I do regard you with very partial eyes, I confess.'

'Ah! and that blinds you to my faults? And I have always thought that you kept guard over them, and told me of them, and therefore I loved and valued you more than all the world beside.'

'Dear Judith, so I do—but—'

'But still—I know very well what you mean. I have found it out by the change of circumstances. I have seen more than one side of myself lately, and sides that you can't get a sight of. I am one person here in your room, with you alone; another with companions I less reverence. The pride which I take in your partiality hardens me to the indifference of others—more, perhaps, than it ought. Then, again, I am not sure that I do not fancy myself more indifferent to their opinion of me than I really am—'

'Now, Judith, take my advice. Mix freely, with as little thought of yourself as may be, in this society which has so suddenly encircled you. You will see much, learn much; and by the time all this disappears, and is as if it had never been more real than the play they are going to act, you will find you have learned many a lesson which shall abide with you through life.'

'Good-bye, dear Miss Evelyn; I must go and study a fresh page of the task you set me.'

Judith was gone in a more tolerant mood than she had brought with her. Miss Evelyn mused a little before she cut the leaves of her new book, and said to herself:

'I am afraid I am going to be very much disappointed, silly old woman that I am.' She refused to entertain the more painful thought that Judith would, perhaps, be disappointed also.

The next day Judith returned, looking far too bright to excite a feeling of apprehension or pity.

'I am come to tell you that I am very much ashamed of myself, and not half so conceited as I was yesterday.'

'What a rapid improvement! — beyond any I hoped for.'

'I am a true penitent. You shall hear. Did I not talk to you as if I considered Beatrice Courtenay a lovely automaton, wound up to sing so many songs a day, and to bestow a certain number of silent smiles in acknowledgment of the applause bestowed on them, with or without delicacy, as the case might be?'

'And how is the case?'

'Oh! Sir Roderic applauds vociferously — he is very kind to her—Lady St. Helens with Italian enthusiasm, Lady Rhoda with blunt decision, Miss Lindsay with warm affection, Mr. Lindsay—' Judith paused, Miss Evelyn felt an increased interest, '— in a way which escapes, and possibly is intended to escape, much observation. I don't think he could praise loudly what he feels deeply.'

'And he does feel music deeply?'

'I suppose so. I will give him credit for that. You see, every one applauds excepting myself; yet my indifference to Beatrice's singing—my want of appreciation of her character—have not in any degree sprung from female envy: of that I am

quite certain—quite—' Judith spoke with glowing face, and honest open countenance, which conveyed 'the full assurance given by looks' to her admiring friend, who needed none.

'And now to return to the point. I went to the Castle on quitting you yesterday, and had my usual dose of music, and wearied of it as much as ever, though I had formed good resolutions as I went. I was also, at first, as stupidly silent as usual, feeling sure that if I unbridled my tongue I should make people stare, say some of those things which you perfectly understand the true bearing of, but which strangers would infallibly misinterpret. I have fallen into a foolish habit with you. I trust you implicitly, and shoot as far beyond the mark as a long sight and a strong arm dispose me to do, knowing that you will gather up my arrows for me, and by some good fairy-work place them safely in the bull's-eye, after all.'

'My dear Judith, I know well what you mean, and I am afraid I have done you harm.'

'No, no, you shan't have done me harm. I will come right yet; don't despair of me. I do not despair of myself: I broke bounds a little yesterday, I confess—I generally do, after particularly wise resolutions. Having hazarded a few sneers at music in general, I tossed my head, and said: 'I could not sing all day, like Miss Courtenay.' Lady Rhoda Marlowe rose, on purpose to overpower me by her height, as well as by her commanding voice in its awful distinctness. She fixed her eyes on me; I met them without quailing, and she said: 'We are perfectly aware, Miss Maxwell, that you could not

sing as Beatrice Courtenay does: very few can—hers is a rare gift, and most worthily employed.' There was a dead silence. Then one silly girl tittered. Lady Rhoda walked away, first bestowing on her a look of disdain. I was abashed, certainly; but I did not feel as I should have felt had there been any spite or envy in my heart. I was conscious that I had shown a ridiculous self-conceit, and I tingled—Lady Rhoda had whipped the naughty child with a nettle.

'That kind Miss Lindsay, who never derives the smallest pleasure from seeing any one discomforted, immediately but unobtrusively seated herself on the sofa by me, and began to speak. Then, as general conversation was restored, she said to me, gently and quietly: 'I don't think, Miss Maxwell, that you very well understand Beatrice Courtenay's position amongst us, nor why we all admire and love her so much.' 'I admire her, too,' I said, 'but I do not appreciate, because I am very stupid and ignorant concerning music. Lady Rhoda applied the lash justly to my impertinent conceit.' I could not help smiling and shrugging my shoulders as if I felt it still. Miss Lindsay smiled also, and said: 'I don't like to hear it applied, even in defence of my friends. But let me tell you something of Beatrice, which, if you are indifferent to her genius, you may, and I think will, know how to value.''

Judith repeated, with generous enthusiasm, Anne Lindsay's history of Beatrice, and of her motives for exertion.

'Well, Judith, this will be a lesson to you to be slow to despise. Beatrice must indeed be very

interesting, and I should much like to see and to hear her.'

'I am resolved that you shall.'

'In a day or two, I dare say, you will have discovered that Mr. Lindsay is in the highest degree deserving of your respect, though he can sing.'

'Dear Miss Evelyn, if he were, he would have repeated his visit here long ago. Do you remember the day that he came?'

'Yes. How agreeable and intelligent I thought him!'

'And he in return declared you to be the most remarkable person he had ever met with. I shall give up the belief that he was capable of forming so just an opinion, unless he finds his way here soon again.'

'My dear, I don't regard it as surprising or unpardonable that just at present he should not think of me at all.'

'Or of anything worth thinking of? When I remember the days of Massillon, I smart all over for my folly.'

'Why was it folly, Judith? Mr. Lindsay is not yet one-and-twenty. You say you do not despair of yourself. Do not despair of him. But who is Lady Rhoda? I have heard her name more than once, and that in a manner which makes me think that she also must be remarkable.'

'Very. She is a cousin of Lady St. Helens—a tall, gaunt woman, with a handsome, severe face. She makes a point of presenting a contrast to her elegant kinswoman as striking as possible. Her dress is more homely than that of the other is

costly. She usually contradicts the Countess whenever she opens her mouth, pets Sir Roderic because his wife insults him, and when she takes notice of the younger folk, wishes to rule them.'

'They, then, are not very grateful for her notice, I presume?' said Miss Evelyn.

'I think Mr. Lindsay likes her; she is an old friend of his English relations; he has an easy, playful manner, by which she is softened and sweetened. But Miss Lindsay is afraid of her.'

'And you, Judith?'

'I fancy I could like her if she would allow me. But she thinks of me, if at all, as of a pert, conceited—perhaps unmannered girl, who ought to be put down—kept back. Perhaps she is right.'

Judith found Beatrice that afternoon alone, and apparently at leisure—a rare occurrence. She immediately took advantage of it to approach her, saying:

'Miss Courtenay, some time when you are disengaged, I should like to take you to the English Cottage to see Miss Evelyn, a countrywoman of yours, and one who would fully understand—derive real pleasure from your singing. She leads such a secluded life now from ill health, and her choice of an abode, that such gratifications are rare to her. You have often heard Mr. Lindsay speak of her.'

'Oh! yes,' replied Beatrice; 'and he has several times spoken of going there, and taking his sister with him. Shall we visit her together?'

'I would rather go with you alone; she is seldom well enough to see many strangers.'

Beatrice shrank a little from this proposal: natu-

rally timid, the bluntness of Judith's manner was rather startling to her, and she was always happier when Anne Lindsay shared her society with her.

'You don't like this?' said Judith.

'Oh! yes,' returned Beatrice; 'let us go, if you wish it, now.'

Judith thought it absurd to draw back, yet was not quite pleased to proceed, and walked in silence through the garden at Beatrice's side. As they were quitting it, they met Horace and Anne.

'Going to Miss Evelyn? I shall be delighted to renew my acquaintance with her, and to introduce Anne. Pray, Miss Maxwell, give me leave to accompany you.'

Judith could not refuse, but stipulated that she should proceed in advance, and warn Miss Evelyn of their approach.

'I shall like to see them very much,' was Miss Evelyn's reply; and she received them with what might well be called urbanity: it was far beyond conventional courtesy—it was the benevolence of age toward youth. Horace felt that he had deferred his visit to his own loss, and had deprived his sister and Beatrice of a valuable privilege. Judith's eyes glistened, for she saw that her friend was duly regarded. After a while she even glanced at the piano, and said to Horace:

'I should like Miss Evelyn to hear Miss Courtenay sing, and I should like quite as well for her to hear Miss Evelyn play.'

Horace had a happy facility in accomplishing people's wishes. Beatrice was soon at the piano, and he watched with delight the expression of Miss

Evelyn's countenance as she listened: she was, as he expected, worthy to listen. The Opera naturally came into discussion.

'I shall bring my aunt here, that she may profit by your remarks, if you will allow me. I am sure Lady St. Helens will make your acquaintance with the utmost pleasure, if you can resolve to admit so many invaders.' Horace spoke fearlessly, for he not only knew that at present he was all-powerful with his aunt, but was also assured that Miss Evelyn's merits would not be thrown away on her. She played a few chords herself on her instrument, which, though small, was of peculiar sweetness, and the beauty of her touch was striking: but she was merely trying to explain a remark she had made, and seemed indisposed to further exertion.

Horace soon availed himself of the permission he had won to bring the Countess, who was quite as graceful and as gracious as he had hoped that she would be: she at once recognised the high-bred lady, the woman of rare cultivation and natural endowments.

'How terrible to live here in the shade, quite thrown away! But then her health is so bad!' was the Countess's comment.

When Lady Rhoda heard the last portion of it, she expressed an intention of visiting Miss Evelyn also: she particularly piqued herself on her medical skill, and was certain that she could alleviate her sufferings. Judith was horrified at the idea, but she knew that Miss Evelyn could protect herself with quiet firmness, and desired that she should become acquainted with the only remaining inmate

of the Castle, whom she thought otherwise than commonplace. Lady Rhoda went, and liked Miss Evelyn no less than others did, but regretted that she was unfortunately prejudiced and timorous, as she declined the use of certain infallible remedies.

From this time, Miss Evelyn's cottage became a favourite rendezvous of the party at the Castle. The Countess often condescended to be brilliant and amusing, but was sometimes selfish and fatiguing. Lady Rhoda's sterling worth was valued, and it was observed that she would return from the Cottage with an unusual softness of manner. Anne was cordial, and soon loved to speak with Miss Evelyn of her brother and of her friend; and Miss Evelyn strove with success to strengthen in both Anne and Horace a sense of the responsibility of the position which the latter appeared destined to fill. The gentle, imaginative Beatrice engaged Miss Evelyn's lively sympathy. Touched by her loveliness and the loneliness of her situation, she sought her confidence with the desire of being useful to her, and soon taught Beatrice to delight to sit beside her chair, and to disclose to her the thoughts and feelings and few events of her past life, and her future aims and hopes. Often did this pleasurable intercourse with Miss Evelyn recal Mr. Howard to Beatrice's mind; she would muse on the striking parity in the gifts of intellect, on the melancholy disparity in the peace of the soul. While Beatrice always spoke gratefully of Lady St. Helens' generosity and zeal, Miss Evelyn detected misgivings of which she could too plainly discern the cause.

It was with relief that Beatrice turned to Anne, and expressed the entire confidence she reposed in her goodness and truth; of Anne's brother she spoke little, but when Miss Evelyn thought of the daily intercourse, the necessary rehearsals which now took place between them, she felt an anxiety on the matter which was not confined to her alone, though none as yet expressed it.

Of the benefits thus generally derived from Miss Evelyn's influence, Judith was a partaker. All learned to value her more on discovering the value which Miss Evelyn set on her; and she began to find herself in a more prominent position, which gave her freer scope, and restored her father to better humour. As on Horace's first visit, so again now she found him frequently applying to her for information, and even advice; and was often the chosen companion of him and of Anne, while Beatrice, when the Countess would spare her, was very happy to join them.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The gentle heart scorns base encouragement.
SPENSER.

THE design of the opera in some measure took gradually a different character from the first which was assigned to it. The Countess of St. Helens had, in the course of the rehearsals, discovered in Beatrice such remarkable powers of acting as surprised and delighted her. If they existed, why might they not be cultivated with a view to her future advantage? She had a vague, she chose it to be a very vague recollection of Mr. Howard's saying to her one day, that Courtenay would never permit his granddaughter to go on the stage. Though unwilling to encounter the difficulties of costume or scenery, and not very desirous to engage in the expense of them, she resolved to afford Beatrice some scope in the most remarkable scenes of the chosen opera, *La Sonnambula*. The Countess, in good humour herself, was content to put others in good humour, and agreed that the music should be succeeded by dancing. This improvement Judith communicated to Miss Evelyn with considerable elation; besides which, she had to consult her on

a point of no small importance. Her father had laid on her no less than a command to obtain a very handsome dress from Edinburgh for the occasion. Judith with some distress had urged her own ideas on him: 'Indeed, father, it will never suit me to emulate these grand people of fashion. You can't think how simply Miss Lindsay and Beatrice Courtenay will be dressed.'

'Very likely. It would not suit either of them to expend the sum of money I design for you. There shall be no woman in the room better dressed than my daughter.'

'But I have not a person that can bear much parade. I shall only look short and vulgar if I am bedizened out. Let me consult Miss Evelyn. You know she has both taste and acquaintance with good society. See how all these people regard her.'

The beginning of this speech frightened Maxwell, and the end of it convinced him. He consented, to Judith's inexpressible relief, that the question should be submitted to Miss Evelyn's decision.

'Well, my dear child, I should like you to have a pink dress, for that will suit your white skin and black hair. Besides, as Miss Lindsay and Beatrice mean to be in white, and exactly alike, you will form a happy contrast. I don't see why your father should not give you a set of pearls, as he is so liberally disposed.'

'Oh! I don't wish for them in the least. What a sum of money to throw away! Moreover, there is Beatrice's string of pearls—her only and constant ornament. I don't wish to call forth any compa-

risons—to appear to attempt to rival or surpass her on such a point as that: and Annunziata, her Italian nurse would be greatly offended.'

'Then you can content yourself with silver?'

'Certainly.'

The next day, Judith brought some beautiful filigree silver ornaments of Genoese workmanship, and placed them before Miss Evelyn.

'Do those satisfy you?'

'How very elegant! You look pleased, Judith.'

'I am, with the way in which they came into my possession. Miss Lindsay is so good-natured, one does not mind asking her a question; so I just inquired of her what sort of thing silver ornaments ought to be, and explained a little why I wanted to learn. She coloured, as people do when a new idea, and a pleasant one, comes suddenly into their head, and looked really to my eyes very pretty. 'I beg your pardon,' she said, and ran out of the room. In two or three minutes she returned, accompanied by her brother, with this case in her hand; opened it, and placed it before me. 'How elegant!' I exclaimed. 'These are foreign.' 'They are,' she answered. 'I brought them from Genoa, and you must do us the favour of accepting and wearing them on the night of the ball. You cannot think how much pleasure it will give us, if you will consider them as the slightest possible token of the grateful regard which we feel when we reflect on all your exertions among those who owe, I grieve to say, but too little to ourselves. I should not have thought of offering you these trifles, had not your inquiries reminded me of them. They lay unappropriated in my

trinket-box, and my brother, whom I consulted, agrees with me in thinking this an agreeable use to make of them. Her manner was so kind, and her brother seconded her with so much delicacy, and a gracefulness which, I must say, belongs especially to him, that I could not do otherwise than I have done—accept them.' Judith's eyes glistened. In a moment she added:

'If I had thought it only thanks—if they had not showed a cordial liking—I could not, I would not, have taken the gift.'

'Indeed, I think it must be gratifying to you and to your father. You could not have rejected it without wounding the Lindsays keenly; and certainly they said only what you de—'

'Now stop, pray stop. I will not have a word of of that, please: it is dreadful. I want to talk to you about that pretty Beatrice, whom I really begin to care for, a little.'

'I do, a great deal.'

'I was amused yesterday. I am sure that she excites no small jealousy in some of the ladies at the Castle; and I must tell you how well Mr. Lindsay can lead them on to betray themselves. We were all sitting working—that is, idling and gossiping together, when one of the number began to laugh at Miss Courtenay's accent (which is really the slightest thing in the world, if not the prettiest), calling it broken English. 'We islanders are so absurd!' she said. 'She is quite right, you know, to play the foreigner. Of course, she must adopt an Italian name, if she intends to make any sensation.' 'La Beatrice,' cried Mr. Lindsay, 'will sound

charming! to be sure, she has some reason to be proud of the English name she bears, but no doubt she will lay it aside for a more melodious one.' 'I have singularly no fears,' was the next observation; 'it is such bad taste. An eternal black silk dress is quite remarkable.' 'And a string of pearls round the throat, morning and evening, can only be worn,' said Horace, 'to call forth a multitude of allusions to a skin much whiter.' 'A pity, that on the night of the opera we cannot offer the tribute of a necklace of diamonds.' 'Oh! I dare say that jewels will not always be wanting,' said another, who had not spoken hitherto, while the one who began the subject continued: 'I suppose she has heard too often of the Madonna-like style of her beauty, ever to have it quite absent from her mind.' 'No doubt,' returned Mr. Lindsay, in a tone so sarcastic that I wondered the lady did not discover that his remarks were directed rather against her than the unoffending Beatrice, 'this consciousness is the sole cause of that peculiar sweetness and serenity of countenance, of the habitual downcast look of the finest eyes in the world, and the singular simplicity and grace with which she disposes of the braids of hair so rich in colour and so profuse in quantity.' 'Oh! I quite agree with you as to her affectation,' exclaimed the lady he addressed, in tones of delight, only checked by the sudden appearance of Beatrice herself from the inner room. She stood for a moment in the doorway; her cheek had more colour than usual, and I fancied there was a look of slight reproach in her eye, which fell on Mr. Lindsay. But he sprang up from the sofa; and no one ever

looked less guilty, or better pleased to see another, than he did. I can't say as much for the ladies. She must have known that they were talking of her, from their faces, even if she did not come to warn them, as I suppose her to have done.'

'Poor Beatrice, hers is a perilous position!'

'Sometimes I think it enviable,' replied Judith. 'She looks forward, as few can, to serving those she loves. And though it is not her song that charms me, I can feel what it must be to have such a magic power, and to see the spell work. Her beauty, too —it must be pleasant to possess it!'

'I wish all who can feel that, as you do at this moment, could be as free from envy as you are!'

'I wish so, too; for it would make Beatrice happier. She cannot divert herself with envy and jealousy as I should, were I the object of them.'

'Not a very innocent amusement, Judith.'

'Perhaps not. I shall never be tempted to play at it. But we need not pity Beatrice just now, while she has Lady St. Helens for her patroness, and Lady Rhoda for her protectress, and Mr. Lindsay for her champion.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

All ranged in a ring, and dancing in delight.
SPENSER.

When Johnnie's mother gat word o' that,
Her hands for dule she wrang:
O Johnnie, for my benison
To the grene wood dinna gang.
OLD BALLAD.

IT was the last day before the grand day for which every one was so nearly ready, that the intervening hours threatened to want occupation.

'Come with me to my school,' said Judith. 'You have long promised to do so. You, Miss Courtenay, are engaged to give a music lesson; and you, Mr. Lindsay, an English one. It will really be very diverting, and I never saw more idle people than you at present appear to be.'

'Oh, yes!' said Anne. 'Do let us go. My aunt does not want any of us.'

They set out to walk to the schoolhouse, and arrived within sight of it a few minutes before the hour at which the children assembled. A group of girls were dancing reels on a pleasant piece of turf by the roadside. They broke off with a laugh as they saw the ladies approach.

'You come to instruct,' cried Judith; 'but here is an opportunity of gaining instruction. I have in vain tried to make you accomplish the true Highland fling. Only see.'

She moved forward, and bid the girls continue their dance; shaking off their bashfulness, they recommenced by degrees with a natural grace; and Judith, catching their spirit, mingled with them, and in a few minutes was dancing as merrily as the others, till all, exhausted, threw themselves on the grass, while their spectators expressed the pleasure it had given them to view the lively scene.

'It was nice of the children,' said Anne, 'to go on with frank good-nature as soon as they understood that we really wished to see them.'

'That is just what I think,' replied Judith, with the cordiality which had existed between her and Anne Lindsay since the affair of the silver ornaments.'

In a little cove of the lake not a hundred yards from the schoolhouse, and lying immediately below a road which led to the castle, while Judith Maxwell and her companions were occupied in the schoolroom with as much or more interest than they had anticipated, were two fishermen trimming their boat and preparing to set sail: the one was a youth of open countenance, but wild and impetuous; that of the other was somewhat sinister and ferocious in expression. There were several men and women on the shore, followers of the same craft, and one of the most experienced of the former eyed the sky with that odd, half-cunning look with which a sailor foresees a storm, and muttered half aloud a prognos-

tication of bad weather. Dermot, the elder fisherman, glanced at him fiercely and forbid him to croak his forebodings, when an aged woman rapidly descended the steep path which led into the cove, waving her hands in the air.

'Angus,' she cried, in Gaelic, 'I forbid this voyage. It ends in death. Come back, as you value my peace of mind or my blessing. I tell you that I saw you standing at my side while I sat at my wheel. I had been to the door to look out. I saw the wild storm come dancing up the glen. I went in and shut the door, as if I could shut out my misery. I returned to my wheel, and, God forgive me! I tried to sing. Then didst thou stand beside me! Leave me not, my son—leave me not, or I shall never see thee again.'

'As safe, mother, on sea as on land. If death come, he can walk on the surest ground as well as he can ride on the wildest wave.'

'No, no; I know that the peril was of the water, because thou hadst thy fisher-net in thy hand.'

'But that is as often the case with me on land as at sea. All this morning have I been mending it in this shed.'

Morag was not to be silenced by jest or subterfuge. Her son seemed to be half shaken by her entreaties or by her prognostics, when his dark-browed companion put his hand heavily on the youth's shoulder, saying:

'Now tell me, Angus, comest thou with me and as fair a wind as ever favoured fisher, or bidest thou here to grow pale at old wives' tales?'

There was a biting tone of irony in the man's

tone which made Angus redden, and move uneasily under the pressure of his hand.

'I promised you my company,' he cried, 'for the half of what we take, and I am not going to throw up the bargain. Let us start.'

'And you, Dermot,' cried old Morag, 'it suits you ill to gainsay my words, for I tell you there was a dark figure lurking behind my boy, and I could not guess whom it might be; but as they melted away, the plaid fell partly from the face of the second, and I know how that they were your sandy locks and cold grey eye that met my view. Beguile the boy to his ruin, and you share it.'

'Why, mother,' replied Dermot, scoffingly, 'I have less scruple than ever in urging our departure now; but if Angus has either scruple or fear, let him set his foot on the strand, and never speak to Dermot of joining him more.'

He tarried for a minute to give Angus time to stamp himself a coward for ever in his estimation; and as the youth turned determinedly away from his mother, he pushed the boat from the shore. The wind caught the sail which Angus unfurled, and they were soon past a point which, once doubled, placed them out of view.

It was at this juncture that Judith Maxwell and her companions, returning from the school, were attracted by the noisy group gathered together in the cove. Morag had seated herself on a stone, silent with grief and anger. Some of the expressions used by the women in their vociferations caught Judith's ear.

'Let us go down, and inquire into the meaning

of this,' she said. As she approached, Morag rose up wildly.

'He has dishonoured my grey hairs,' she exclaimed. 'He has brought his doom on his own head. I knew how it would be from the day that Dermot shared his boat with him.'

She stalked up the cliff, without pausing to heed the gentry.

'This is a strange tale,' cried Judith, after listening eagerly to the various versions of the occurrence poured out by the bystanders. 'With you,' she said to her companions, 'it will pass for the wildest superstition; nor do I speak in full faith. Yet I heartily wish that we had arrived ten minutes earlier. The command of his young laird might have restrained this wilful boy when the supplication of his mother failed to do so.'

She repeated the circumstances as she had gathered them.

'It is useless,' said Horace, 'to argue against such an impression as this; nothing can efface it but the safe return of the fishermen.'

'But will they return?' asked Judith; and the whole party proceeded homewards, without a vestige of that liveliness which had animated them in the former part of their walk.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Grief claimed his right, and tears their course.
LADY OF THE LAKE.

THE night was stormy—stormy enough to justify old Morag's prognostications; but the weather gradually cleared, the clouds rolled away, and the scenery of Duror's lake and mountains looked as beautiful as those gathered together to rejoice on the birthday of Duror's future Laird could desire that it should look.

Judith was actively employed thoughout the day, yet more than once the remembrance of Moray forced itself upon her, and she longed to make her escape to the old woman's cottage. But her father demanded her thoughts and utmost attention. He battled with the energy of mental strength against bodily infirmity; regulated, superintended everything with admirable skill; and appeared at the tenants' dinner at Sir Roderic Lindsay's left hand, his nephew being placed on his right. Mr. Douglas and Mr. Cameron were next to Horace.

The Baronet, in a flowery speech, lauded his agent in the highest degree, and then proceeded to lavish more delicate praise on Judith, the benefactress of

the poor. To these Horace Lindsay warmly responded, and all eyes were turned towards her as she stood among the group of ladies.

With emotions painful from excess and mixed in nature, though she could not then analyse them, Judith listened. The meed of praise accorded by Horace was proffered with so much refinement and generosity, that none could have received it unmoved. The florid discourse of Sir Roderic had called the colour to her cheek, but certainly not the tears to her eye. A feeling half of annoyance and half of an intense desire to escape was that which she chiefly experienced; but when Horace spoke, her sensations assumed a different character. With a dread of she knew not what, she saw her father rise to return thanks for himself and for her. Tears forced their way, a convulsive sob filled her throat. With one hand she grasped the support of the tent against which she leaned; who was it that took the other with a soft, kind touch, which seemed to lend more support in its sympathy than the strong iron bar to which she clung? It was Beatrice. Judith started with surprise, and felt, as she had never felt before, the exceeding beauty of the face which beamed on her in its sisterly love. And Horace, as he turned his looks to the spot where both stood, saw only Beatrice. Maxwell observed the direction of the young man's face, and the expression of tenderness and admiration which suddenly lit up his eyes, and was more than satisfied. The agent's words were forcible and few. 'The interest of every inhabitant of Duror, from the poorest in the glen to the noblest in the castle, was the object sacred to

his own and to his daughter's heart and mind, and to that sacred object he did believe them to have been ardently devoted. How fervent, then, the joy and satisfaction with which they recognised the due estimation in which it was held by the Laird and the acknowledged heir of Duror!' As Maxwell spoke, there was the pride of successful ambition on his brow, fire flashed from his eye, and, in the contentment of his heart at that moment, his face glowed with something of the sunshine which usually made his daughter's so much more agreeable than his own to look on. But all brightness faded away, and he sank down again, a man broken by sickness. Judith saw the change, and would gladly have sprung to his side. Beatrice perceived her impulse, and its cause; and Judith, feeling herself understood, recognised in turn that the coming effort of the evening was no mere play of vanity to Beatrice, and rendered back the tribute of reverential sympathy which filial love deserved.

Judith returned home with her father, and as she was to see him no more till the morrow, would gladly have remained with him till the evening; but he insisted, with the irritability of over-excitement, that she should repair again to the Castle for the four-o'clock dinner, where the guests were to assemble, and afterwards were expected to dispose of themselves as they pleased till the entertainments should begin at eight. Judith found something to do for everybody, and felt her powers of exertion increase as the scope for them widened. At length she went to her own room to prepare herself for the ball, and had not been there many moments,

when Effie, the housemaid, abruptly opened the door.

'Are you come to see my finery—to help me to put it on?' asked Judith, smiling; but she stopped short when she saw the pale, scared face of the girl. She drew her into the room. 'Effie, Effie, what has happened?'

'I was resolved you should know of it. Poor Morag! her words are always true. Who in the glen ever found them false? over-true now—' The girl sobbed violently.

'What, Angus?' faltered Judith.

'And his wild companion,' replied Effie; 'both lost! Angus is found — washed on shore, and brought home; and she is crazed—like a mad creature—and they don't think she will get through the night. If you could have been with her—but you can't—'

'Can't?' said Judith, thoughtfully, and she approached the window. 'I can—I will. No one needs me here; and if they did for their pastime, should that keep me from old Morag in her woe? Who can blame me? None; not my father. If I act otherwise, the words I heard this morning stamp me a hypocrite. It was bad enough to listen to them while I could believe that they contained some truth; but to remember them falsified!—they would burn into my brain.'

While meditating thus, she was also putting on her plaid as fast as she could,—Effie standing by, half dismayed, half delighted.

'But if I am missed,' continued Judith to herself,

'if any do concern themselves about me—if they were to send to disturb my father—that must not be. To whom can I now speak with a chance of being understood? Miss Lindsay, she has usually some calmness left.'

She darted through the passages to Anne's room; she was gone to superintend Beatrice's toilet. Judith, hastily snatching some writing materials, wrote, in a large, bold hand: 'I am going out to a poor woman who is in great need of me. Keep my secret. Don't let me be thought of, spoken of, if you can prevent it. Judith Maxwell.'

She would not sadden Anne by revealing the true case to her. She laid the note on her dressing-table, and in a few minutes was beyond the Castle-grounds. On she went, without time for regret or misgiving. She reached the cottage-door — she heard wild sounds of woe, but they came not from Morag, of that she was convinced. She entered; the place was full to suffocation (it was but a mud-floored hovel), and Judith's sudden apparition was beheld with surprise and satisfaction. With the air of authority it was natural enough to her to assume, she bid those assembled draw back from the speechless mourner, to whose side she made her way. She threw herself on her knees, and taking Morag's hand, she said:

'I am come to you. You know that I am here—'

'You came too late to curb his wilfulness,' cried Morag, suddenly; 'and now!—'

'God stayed my steps then, in His wisdom, which is not as our wisdom; He has hastened them

now in His mercy, that I may weep with you, pray with you!'

Morag rose. On the bed lay what Judith knew must be the body of her son, shrouded in a sail of his boat. The mother stood beside it, and said:

'This morning I wept and prayed—this evening I do neither.' But the movement was too much for her exhausted strength; and as she spoke, she fell senseless on the bed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Sans aucun tour, sans nulle singularité, sans faste, sans affectation ; ce n'est pas une scène qu'elle joue pour le public—Aristarque se transporte dans la place, avec un héraut et une trompette. LA BRUYERE.

WHILE Judith's ear was pierced by the shrill cry which told that Morag had regained consciousness, Beatrice, with a deep delight of heart which augured future success, with a thrilling anticipation of what the enjoyment of that success would be, was pouring forth the ecstatic notes of her last song:

'Ah! non giunge uman pensiero
Al contento del mio cor!'

The youthful simplicity with which she uttered these words—the modest delight in the acknowledgment of her innocence—the loveliness of her countenance—the unaffected gestures so expressive of overflowing happiness,—all was so fresh and beautiful, that every one who listened was enraptured. Horace was so truly Elvino, that he forgot the presence of all save Amina. He heard not the din of applause. Anne started when the song was over; till then every thought centred in Beatrice, but now

her wishes were completed, and Anne had leisure to ask herself:

'Judith—that strange Judith,—I wonder if her absence was indispensable?'

The ball had begun, the first dance was over, when Horace addressed his sister:

'I can't make it out, Anne; where can Miss Maxwell have hid herself? I promised my uncle to dance with her early in the evening.'

'You cannot keep your promise; she is not here—'

'Her father ill? I hope not!'

'No, but she is absent in a good cause, I believe. To-morrow I suppose we shall know more of her. She begged me to keep her absence as secret as I could.'

'That is not possible. My uncle, you saw the sort of interest he expressed—how he brought her forward this morning. I am sure he will not be content to lose sight of her now. You must make the best explanation you can.'

'I will,' replied Anne; and a moment afterwards she saw her brother dancing with Beatrice, and met her uncle with a black cloud on his brow.

'Thoughtless—regardless—Horace has not danced with Miss Maxwell yet. I have been looking for her everywhere, that I might dance with her myself.'

'But, my dear uncle, Horace is not in fault, and you will look in vain. She is not here!'

'Not here! What folly is this? Has anything offended her? Your aunt!—this is too bad; she shall answer for this.'

'Indeed, my aunt is quite innocent. Miss Maxwell was called away by a summons she would not disregard—to a poor woman in distress, I believe.'

'Absurd! her head was turned by our compliments of this morning, I see. Very vexatious! I would not have had this happen for—'

'Nor I,' interrupted Anne. 'Poor Judith, she must have wished to be here.'

'Not she, a little satirical creature—Maxwell over again. Your amusements are to her matters of ridicule,' said Sir Roderic, with an ill humour rare in him. 'And as to that Italian beauty on Horace's arm, it was an act of madness to bring her here, nor should she have stayed under this roof had she not been—' But here Sir Roderic broke off abruptly, afraid of exciting Anne's curiosity.

Nothing could exceed the brilliancy, the complete success of the entertainment. Lady St. Helens congratulated herself; Sir Roderic looked miserably discontented; she supposed that was because she was pleased. Horace was as popular as a young heir on the day of his coming of age could expect to be. Beatrice was the star of the evening.

The sun was rising as Judith returned to the Castle. The morning breeze blowing across the lake refreshed her after a sleepless night. Her step was elastic. She had not watched in vain. Gradually had she won Morag from her blank despair to a better mood; and when at length she laid her grey head on her shoulder and wept like a young child, Judith felt that a great change was worked and a great reward gained. After this natural outburst of sorrow, she could pray, and endure to listen to

Judith's words, which were few and simple. Mr. Cameron came down to the cottage almost with the dawn, for Morag was one he knew well and esteemed. Judith on his arrival prepared to withdraw, but the mourner would not dispense with a promise of her return.

Judith would have been more inclined to go to her own home than to the Castle, had she known how to meet her father; she did not for a moment entertain the idea of permanent concealment, but she wished to render his disappointment as slight as possible. She had seen his over-anxiety to have her presence recognised at all the festivities; and while she did not entertain the feeling in the same degree, she could not but consider it in him. She glanced round the ball-room and the stage as she passed—the faded flowers, the burnt-out lights. 'All gone,' she said, 'and I saw none of it in its brightness. I wonder if they enjoyed all the pleasure, all the triumph they anticipated. I long to know how Beatrice sang and acted. Was I missed by one, even one?'

She went on to her own room. Her black hair was uncurled and damp. She pushed it aside, and, wearied, worn out by the exertion she had gone through, cast herself on her bed, and fairly cried herself to sleep. When she opened her eyes, Anne Lindsay was standing beside her:

'I wanted to know if you were returned, and what you have been doing?'

Judith told her.

'What a strange, wild, unaccountable tale! Poor Morag! What can be done for her, Judith?'

'I shall see later. As soon as breakfast is over, I must go to my father; I shall stay for that to glean anecdotes for him.'

'He cannot be displeased, he can only be proud of his daughter.'

'Proud? I cannot see that—what else was there to do? But tell me, did Beatrice succeed?'

'Admirably!'

'I am very glad,' cried Judith, with cordial warmth; and Anne smiled with pleasure.

'Ah! little truant!' was Sir Roderic's greeting.

'Sir Roderic, you are always good-natured—do not speak of me and of my proceedings, and then no one will waste a thought on them,' said Judith, with real earnestness.

'Not so,' interposed Horace; 'I hope later, Miss Maxwell, to understand them better. You must not refuse me the gratification.'

'No,' replied Judith; 'what I have to say will have an interest for you.'

Judith's intelligence, however, was fated not to be the first which should reach her father's ears. A tenant, who had contrived to see most of what had taken place at the Castle, came to see him, and sat gossiping on while the agent was eating his breakfast. Maxwell, a man never disposed to familiarity, checked it now with greater assumption of dignity than pleased a Highlander prouder than himself, saying:

'I shall hear all these details from my daughter, my good friend.'

This remark afforded the man the opportunity of

avenging himself for the slight put upon him, and he immediately replied:

'Shall you? Why, scarcely so well as from myself, I think. I must say, it seemed odd to me, especially after all that was said in the morning, that Miss Judith should not be present. I asked the servants —I feared she might be ill; but they said for certain not that, for she was working away at the make-believe theatre, and the garlands, till the last.'

Maxwell's dark skin grew darker with ire, and then suddenly blanched.

'There is some mistake here,' he said, as coolly as he could. 'My daughter is now at the Castle, and was present last night at the ball.'

His tormentor saw that the proud man's hand shook as he raised his cup to his lips. Maxwell's eye caught his, and read enjoyment of his discomfort in it. He half rose from his seat, the door opened, and Judith entered.

'Good-day, Mackenzie. Dearest father, I am come to tell you all the news.' She came towards him with one of the brightest looks.

Her father extended his hands, and held her at a little distance from him, as he fixed his piercing eye on her face:

'Judith, were you at the ball last night?'

Judith paused for an instant; her quick perception told that Mackenzie had forestalled her, or not in his presence had the interrogation been put. In a clear voice, she answered:

'No, father.'

'Where were you, then?' asked Maxwell, in a low concentrated tone.

'I was with Morag Alison. Yesterday, her son—her only son—was brought back to her, drowned.' Judith hastily drew away her hands from her father's hold, hid her face in them, and burst into tears.

'Good morning, Mackenzie,' said Maxwell. 'You will now know how to account for my daughter's absence when you hear it commented on.'

The man quitted the room. Judith checked her sobs, she came close to her father's side.

'I have vexed you,' she said, softly. 'I knew I should; and the thought of your disappointment came over me, even then.'

'Yet you went,' returned Maxwell, gloomily.

'Oh! father, could I do otherwise? Effie came to me with these tidings of wretchedness. If ever such bereavement fall on you, may God send you a comforter!'

The girl looked up to heaven with glistening eyes. Even Maxwell's heart, steeled as it was by ambition, could not frame a rebuke. Moreover, he had before this day come to the conclusion that Judith must be herself, and take her own way; and it happened that, without coercion, she had hitherto gone, and perhaps even in this was going, his way. Therefore, he forgave her, at least for the time.

'Well, Judith,' he said, 'I suppose I must not reprove you.'

'No, indeed,' replied Judith, recovering herself; and then she spoke to him, not of poor Morag and her woe, but of the doings at the Castle.

A smile of something very like derision came occasionally to Maxwell's lips as he listened. Judith was annoyed and perplexed; but when she told him

that it was Anne Lindsay in whom she had placed her confidence, and who had stood by her bedside that morning, a smile of approbation took its place.

Judith quitted her father to go to Morag, according to her promise. Maxwell saw her depart with satisfaction, for he desired to be alone. After a rapid consideration of what had taken place, he repaired to the Castle, there to tell, without loss of time, Judith's story, with far more effect than Judith would have given it. At least, such was his design, and he did not detect his failure, for Horace Lindsay turned hastily away to conceal the expression of disgust and annoyance on his countenance, saying to his sister, in private:

'How unlike Judith's simplicity of action is her father's vainglorious comment!'

'Judith,' said Anne. 'Nothing could be more unaffected than her whole proceeding.'

Maxwell, with all his sensitiveness to ridicule, did not recognise how much he exposed himself to it, in his extreme anxiety to counteract any erroneous inference which might be drawn from Judith's non-appearance at the ball.

Poor Judith, when she became aware of her father's proceedings, was silent with dismay and vexation; indeed, she could not trust herself to speak or to expostulate.

The mischief was irretrievable. Moreover, she perceived that her father, though he disavowed any displeasure, could not really altogether reconcile himself to her act, and to the freedom she had asserted in it, and was in a humour to resent greatly the slightest contradiction of opinion.

CHAPTER XXX.

So to the sea we came ; the sea that is
A world of waters heaped up on high ;
Rolling like mountains in wild wilderness,
Horrible, hideous, roaring with hoarse cry.

SPENSER.

THE boisterous weather which had visited the coast of Duror with fatal effect, did not immediately subside. On a morning brilliant with the fitful effects of light and shade, Beatrice was standing alone on the terrace looking out over the water. Every wave had its glittering crest of snow. Beatrice, very little acquainted with the sea, had never seen it in its present state before, and began to muse on the familiar sayings of its treachery and its fickleness. The wild beauty of the scene she contemplated, wakened all the poetry of her nature. A step fell on her ear—a step which ever quickened the pulsation of her heart. Horace was at her side, his countenance glowing with animation, his dark hair swept across his forehead by the breeze. The Highland garb which he had a few days since adopted, he now wore with easy grace.

'Miss Courtenay,' he said, 'you are enjoying this scene; but you must not remain here, where you have no idea of its magnificence. Come with me. I came to seek you. I want to lead you by

a path you have never trodden yet. It will bring us down close to the shore; the wild waves will rise to our very feet.' He led her on, animated by an earnest desire to secure his object without the intervention of any third person—to stand alone with Beatrice on the spot from whence he returned, and to watch the effect the sublimity of the scene would have on her, with not another eye to read the eloquence of her countenance. But Horace had not foreseen all the results of his proposed experiment. Proceeding rapidly by a path somewhat precipitous, but in serene weather not alarming, he was astonished to feel Beatrice's hand tremble on his arm, as the roar of the waves grew louder, and their white spray dashed higher and higher. He turned to her, perceived that her cheek and lips were become colourless, and heard her, in low, panting accents, exclaim:

'I cannot, indeed I cannot go further—my head is dizzy, my feet fail me. I shall fall into that whirling abyss!'

'Not while I am at your side. Have you no confidence in this arm? Look away—don't turn your eyes downwards—shut them for a while. I cannot bear that you should retreat immediately. It is worth a trial to see such a spectacle. Only habit can conquer these sensations; every moment will weaken them. Do you think I could trifle with your safety? Lean on me. There—you are growing braver.'

And, reassured by his voice, by his smile, still clinging almost convulsively to him on one side, clutching with her hand the scanty herbage on the

other, Beatrice ventured to look down again on the foaming waters below, here gurgling round a hidden rock in midnight blackness, there tossing high in contortions as if frenzied by resistance they could neither brook nor conquer.

'Beautiful! terribly beautiful!' she said, closing her eyes after a few moments.

'And now,' said Horace, with gentle force, 'you must come further. When we turn that point, we shall gain more than you can imagine.'

'Ah!' returned Beatrice, plaintively. 'It is just that turn which I dread. You smile! What a coward you think me! But if I promise to be brave, I shall promise in vain. When I reach that spot, all my courage will disappear.'

'Against the perils of the place I undertake to secure you. It is moral, not physical courage I ask of you, Beatrice; and I know you have that. Trust to me, and believe that the danger is imaginary. Will you not trust me? Shall we go forward, or back?'

Beatrice trembled, but trusted, and said: 'Forward.'

Horace led her on, and round the dreaded turn into a sheltered nook beyond. As he had promised her, the magnificence of the spectacle was increased threefold, and she had regained a sense of security. They were at the end of a natural terrace, sloping as it proceeded down to the shore. When the sea was calm, and the tide low, all the rocks which were the groundwork of the billowy tumult lay bare; and here and there, even now in their inmost recesses, were basins of water undisturbed.

'See,' said Beatrice, after an interval of very acceptable repose. 'See, there is all the toil and tumult of the world which I have yet to battle with; and here are calm retreats, Heaven reflected on them, where I would fain be.'

'They are beautiful in their clear stillness,' replied Horace, 'but without your indication would scarcely catch my attention. This scene awakens in me only the desire to ride the storm. Those glassy pools are but as the aimless childhood we have both passed, Beatrice—'

At this moment, a gesture of astonishment on the part of Beatrice arrested Horace's speech, much to his dissatisfaction; but, following the direction of her eyes, he could not help participating in her sensation. They saw a woman's figure appear on the crest of the rocks above them, rather further down the terrace. She fearlessly began to descend where no track was visible; probably well acquainted with the ground, she proceeded without once pausing, till she reached the sands, and seated herself on a rock, whence she must have at command a wider view than their own. Beatrice had watched her prompt movements breathlessly:

'It is, I am sure it is Judith Maxwell!' she exclaimed.

'Bravely done!' cried Horace. 'A true mountain maid, a true Highland lassie!'

Judith was unconscious of their near presence, and sat there with a proud exultation they could descry in her bearing. She started up; the blast blew back her bonnet, and scattered her black hair on her shoulders. She clasped her hands with an

expression of horror. The wind brought the tones of her voice towards them, and not of her voice only; she was speaking with another, and that other must be in distress. Horace and Beatrice hastened forward. She saw and eagerly beckoned them on. When they reached her side, for she moved not, she caught Horace's arm, and pointed to a cavern partially filled with water; on a ledge within it was a boy, cowering to its furthest recess. Horace perceived with horror that the water was gradually rising; he called to the boy, and pointed to a spot of greater safety than that to which, half stupified, he clung. The child did not appear to understand him in the least. Judith reiterated the counsel, the wisdom of which she recognised.

'He must hear,' she said; 'the wind bears our voices right into the cave.'

'It is in vain,' cried Beatrice; 'his sense is gone.' The remembrance of her own terror vividly impressed this idea on her mind.

'No, no,' returned Judith; 'only his English memory.' She called to him in Gaelic, and, to her infinite delight, saw him begin to obey.

'I know the place,' she continued, hurriedly, to Horace. 'It is only the unusual fury of the waves that fills it. It is possible that he may be safe yet —none may reach him—But see! Oh! they will! See, see, each mounts higher than the last!'

'Could we obtain ropes before the waves reach his ledge, to save him would be possible—without them, impossible,' said Horace, in a low, steadfast voice; then added, with impetuosity: 'Fly, Miss Maxwell—fly for aid. I will stay here, and make

the attempt, if necessary, before it arrives: I will not wait too long. Go—'

'But you do not understand him,—he does not understand you; that increases the danger so much. Beatrice, go.'

Horace looked at Beatrice's pale face. He knew the terror she had already evinced.

'She is too unused,' he exclaimed, 'to these paths to tread them securely.'

Judith turned away with an angry, impatient gesture. Beatrice sprang forward and stopped her.

'I am going,' she said, and took some steps on the path by which she had arrived.

'Not that way,' cried Judith; 'it is too long. This will lead you straight to the fisher's hut. There is help.'

She pointed to her own descent.

'Impossible!' exclaimed Horace, catching Beatrice's arm. 'You shall not attempt it!'

Judith smiled on them with scorn.

'There is neither difficulty nor danger,' she said.

'You cannot scale it,' repeated Horace.

'I must, I will,' returned Beatrice, earnestly. 'Do not be rash—think of Anne—I will be speedy.'

She broke from his grasp; but he sprang after her, and not without his aid did she mount the first part of the ascent.

Judith looked after them: 'They love each other!' flashed through her mind. 'Is this a time for me to heed that!' was her next thought, and she turned to Colin. She began to speak to him in the most reassuring accents she could command.

'Fear nothing,' she said. 'Help comes. The

waves seldom if ever reach the spot on which you stand. I don't believe they ever reached it. Colin, dear little Colin, say a prayer. Say, after me, Father, which art in heaven, help thy poor child! He will help thee, Colin. Think of Jesus, who walked upon the waters to help his servants. Think of thy mother, dear. She is in Heaven. If the waves bear thee from us, she will welcome her boy in her arms.'

'Mother, mother!' was the boy's answering wail, but it reached not Judith's ears.

'Oh! God! will no aid come?' groaned Judith, with uplifted hands and streaming tears; and she sank on her knees on the sand, and involuntarily hid her face, as a tremendous wave rolled solemnly onwards to engulph the child in its bosom.

'Oh! God! will no aid come?' she murmured again, exhausted by the exertion of keeping her voice at so high a pitch, and by the agony of suspense.

'We can wait no longer,' cried Horace, making her for the first time aware that he was again at her side, where he had stood in silence till he deemed the season for action arrived. 'Now,' he said, in a low, earnest tone; and casting down his plaid, he sprang, before Judith could make any reply, into the water, caught the boy as the wave bore him back on its surface, and began the fight for life and death to regain the shore.

One piercing shriek broke from Judith's lips at the moment when her task was over, and she could do nothing to help. While afraid of startling the child, she had maintained a marvellous self-com-

mand; now she was wild with horror and with anguish. Her cry was not the only one which echoed from the rocks; a loud shout mingled with it from the men who were hurrying down the steep descent, one of them carrying, rather than leading, Beatrice, who was indicating the spot. They gained the shore. The younger fisherman, a robust man of thirty, cast himself, provided with ropes, into the water. Horace had fought with the strength of the approaching billow, and was yet within reach of aid. After a space of time which to Judith and Beatrice seemed immeasurable, they saw him lying on the shore, the pale child at his side: neither could be called sensible, though a languid smile played on Horace's countenance ere he closed the eyes which, in the remaining moment of consciousness, sought Beatrice. Judith gazed down on them; then cried:

'Bear them to the hut at once!'

She was obeyed.

'Here, dear Beatrice, take my arm. Rely on me; I can help you.' She stopped short, having looked at Beatrice as she had not done before; then, turning abruptly away, she said to a tall young Highlander, in Gaelic: 'Here, bring her safely up; you can be spared. I cannot lead her on without help. I think she will faint. Let her rest on the stone for a minute. Don't be frightened: I will stay with you. A fainting woman is not half so bad as a drowned man.'

The mountaineer, who had indeed seemed terribly alarmed at Beatrice's ghastly looks, glanced at the cliff, and said:

'It is something to have crossed that twice at the speed she has used.'

'Ah! I see the men are taking the longest path,' cried Judith, with vexation.

'Nay; the shortest, burdened as they are,' was the man's reply.

'Are you waiting for me?' said Beatrice, rising suddenly; then drawing back as Judith led her towards the path, she added:

'Not that—the cliff—the shortest—his sister—I want to reach the Castle—'

'We shall lose nothing by keeping to this;—you can't climb—you can scarcely stand;—there, take his arm, and take mine.'

And they hurried on. Before they reached the hut, the alarm had been given at the Castle, and those most interested in the event were already collected there. Anne was on her knees beside her brother. Judith made her way to her—feeling that it was not the first time she had witnessed scenes too similar to the present, and eager to render assistance. With the promptitude she had shown on her father's return, she now issued orders which she deemed suitable: Maxwell, who was present, enforced them, as if he considered her words alone worthy of attention.

'He revives—he breathes!' exclaimed Anne. Judith, convinced that Colin was in a state of far more danger than Horace Lindsay, quitted the latter for the former. Horace opened his eyes, pressed his sister's hand, and feebly said:

'Pain—pain made me faint—" then, trying to

movement
must
end on it.'
soon, said
we will be comes.
tion
called to the
mother's
peril with
could scarcely
neither of his
said, 'is
Lindsay must
sequence, or he will
warning, in order to
and patience, who looked hard in
anxiety. Lady St. Helens'
seemed to excite his attention less.
that the attempt to walk was
and consented to be carried to
be asked, before he departed.
taken care of him.'
was sure to do,' replied Horace,
a smile of approbation which disarmed the
which Maxwell looked around on then
perceiving his daughter's absence. 'Strange
' he muttered to himself; 'she seems bent only
manifesting indifference.'

Horace Lindsay now moved forward, followed by a procession of some length. Arnold, accompanying

him, enjoined that he should at once be placed in his own chamber, and not be visited by any one but Anne until he should have seen him the next day. Then taking his leave, he rode round by Colin's cottage, pretty sure that there he should find Judith.

Beatrice gained the first relief which she had been permitted to experience, in crying profusely on Annunziata's neck, and begged permission not to leave her room, acknowledging that she had sustained severe fatigue. Lady St. Helens kissed her, and said the evening would be sadly dull. Annunziata cast no very gentle glance after her, and pronounced it a miracle that her darling child had not broken her neck.

'Don't speak of it, dear Annunziata. Don't bring that foaming water—that giddy precipice—before me again. I wish I were like Judith.'

'What do you mean?' inquired Annunziata, angrily. 'Why should you wish to be like any one else? Who did half so much as you?'

CHAPTER XXXI.

> To thee
> Was given (say rather thou of later birth
> Wert given to her) a sister . . . .
> the meek,
> The self-restraining, and the ever-kind.
>
> WORDSWORTH.

'ANNE,' said Horace, eagerly, 'you know that you owe my life to Beatrice?'

Anne gave a silent gesture of assent, chiefly desirous to calm him; for there was, as night closed in, a feverish glow on his cheek and a bright fire in his eye, and he could no longer be silent and still; but he would not so be calmed.

'That life which you prize,' he continued; 'God knows its real value. I feel as if henceforth it should be of more worth than hitherto. I have all the incitement to good a man can have. And those awful moments! Oh! Anne, as I looked down that foaming chasm, I felt I was not ready to die; but I knew that it was in doing my duty that I braved destruction, and I cried in my heart, "God! be merciful to me a sinner!"—and there was given me, even in that gasp of agony, the conviction that He would be merciful in life or in death.'

'He has been most merciful in yielding you to me,' said Anne, kissing his brow.

Horace caught her hand as she bent:

'Remember what I have told you, and henceforth love her more than ever. You must love her as a sister, Anne.'

Anne made no reply.

'Why don't you speak? You must know—you must have seen—it can't be strange to you. How could it be otherwise?'

'No, no,' said Anne. She half turned away, and Horace's quick ear caught a sigh. He grew pale. He still retained her hand:

'I see, you think there is no hope for me,—that I have been vain, presumptuous. I am not worthy of her, I know; but I have contemplated the making myself more so—I thought, with time; but this morning's events have startled me out of all purposes of deliberation, and awakened hopes— Only tell me one thing, Anne—if you may, if you feel at liberty. You know her; has she a heart to be won?—is it in Italy? I have seen her look sad. I know how she loves that land.'

Anne looked down on him, and allayed his imaginary apprehensions with a smile. She drew away her hand, and placed it on her brother's mouth:

'Now, on but one condition will I utter a word of reply to your question—that you shall not speak again to-night on any subject of interest. Dearest Horace, it is very bad for you, and it is cruel to trifle with your health now, just restored to us from the grave. Her grandfather's hearth, her father's grave—those are the spots where Beatrice's heart lingers: it was free from all other love when we left

Florence together. Now, no answer. I consider that I have your promise.'

Horace, condemned to silence, speculated on the possible extent of Anne's assurance—recalled every tone, every change of expression in Beatrice's face, through this eventful day, and found something so soothing in the employment, that he at length sank into a sleep delightfully refreshing to his wearied frame and spirit. Anne kept watch at his side.

'It could not be otherwise!' she repeated his own words. 'Need I wish it otherwise?—when I love her as a sister for her excellent qualities—when I admire her for her rare adornments of beauty and of genius. Can he expect to look upon her like again? I think not. Can he be content to forego her if she is to be won? Impossible. Why, then, should I try to close his heart or my own to her, in obedience to the dictates of the narrowest worldly prudence? I am sick of the world—very sick. Since sixteen have I lived in it, and at four-and-twenty I have thoroughly sounded its hollowness. I will preach none of its precepts to him.'

Anne's thoughts wandered away to the saddest (and never-communicated) remembrance of her life: she mused on one too poor, and therefore too proud, to ask her to be his wife—who had gone forth to fight the battle of life alone, and fell with no loving hand to close his eyes in death. Tears softly trickled down Anne's cheek—tears never dried by any human friend.

'No,' she said, 'no;' quickly recalling, as was

her wont, her thoughts from herself back to others. 'I will counsel no sacrifice of the heart's deep affections.'

She looked on the young face of the sleeper with indescribable tenderness. 'It would be quite inconsistent with my whole conduct towards him, ever since I have regarded myself as sister, mother, in one. I have never chilled—never thwarted him. I have welcomed his confidence, and striven to the utmost to accomplish his wishes. And why should I combat them now, when they have my approbation? If he is poor—if this inheritance is doomed to be all squandered before the time come when he might look to enjoy it, let him be the maker of his own fortunes. He is equal to the task. His abilities are of a high order. Set a worthy object before him, and he is capable of strenuous exertion. Oh! what a far happier and more honourable course than the race of fashion which our poor uncle has madly run! And Beatrice is worthy—they deserve each other. God forbid that I should separate them!'

Morning came. It was often Anne's way to seek her friend's chamber for a few moments before joining the rest of the inmates of the Castle. There was something extremely delightful to them in this brief communion, while yet fresh from their first offering of their being and their heart to their Creator, before they entered that less pure atmosphere by which they were consciously encircled, or before their minds were distracted by innumerable petty cares. Calm and cordial were the moments of sisterly intercourse which they thus passed toge-

... this morning naturally less calm than ... true would have felt wearied with watch- ... not the buoyancy of thankfulness sustained ... Beatrice had never heard her approach with ... quickness. She was, in truth, depressed by a ... loneliness—not of neglect; she was too ... to exact or expect much attention; but in ... excitement around her she had taken a trying ... not a conspicuous part. She, too, sank ... t ceased; she, too, required some one to ... her hurried spirits, to calm her from the ... though she had not been tossed on the waves ... Horace. It is true that Annunziata had done ... for her; but still it was Anne, his sister, ... she needed, and now she came: she was at ... her arms around her, her kind face beam- ... with happiness, while her eyes were tearful.

"I thought him feverish at first, but afterwards ... slept sweetly—like a tired child. He opened ... eyes, gave me one smile, then slept again; ... that sleep I have left him. I could not keep ... from talking last night; and, Beatrice,—"

Anne drew her nearer, pressed her to her bosom, ... the warm tears fell fast and freely:

"Do you know what he said—what he could not ... without saying? It was, that he owed his life ... you—that the aid you brought saved it!"

Beatrice drew a long, deep breath, bent her head ... on Anne's neck: she did not shed a tear, but, ... low, measured tone, she said:

"You do not know how I toiled to bring it! ... moments seemed hours—I longed to fly, and felt ... if I could not even crawl. And then that

precipice, which I had watched Judith descend with wonder, deeming it impossible to tread the same path a few minutes before!—Oh! Anne, the desperation with which I scaled it, when life—human life—was at stake! Onward, upward I went. I never looked around me or below, and my heart repeated that prayer: 'Give Thy angels charge over me, that I hurt not my foot against a stone!' for I felt that all depended on my doing my mission securely. I was heard. God 'made room enough under me for to go, that my footsteps did not slide.''

'And when you had to descend again?'

'I had help; but I had lost all sense of danger then.'

Anne made no comment; after a few moments' silence, she started, and exclaimed:

'I must go now!'

One warm kiss told her gratitude and her love.

Lady St. Helens was rapturous in her encomiums on Horace. 'And you, my dear,' she added, turning to Beatrice, 'how you ever climbed that rock, Heaven only knows.'

'Heaven only knows,' replied Beatrice, in a low voice. Her tone and manner, as she reiterated Lady St. Helens' expression, was so simply reverential, that it struck every one, and gave an unexpectedly solemn turn to their thoughts. Lady Rhoda, who was on the point of saying: 'Everybody can 'trample on impossibilities' if they choose. Does not Miss Maxwell go up and down the same path any day?' checked herself, looked at Beatrice, perceived that she was very pale, and understood

that her exertions had cost something. She was softened, but she carefully abstained from mingling her voice with the general strain. She did not ask for Horace; she heard all there was to hear without that condescension. In the course of breakfast, she announced that she had deferred her departure till the following day; it had been fixed for the present.

'Better, perhaps,' she said, 'to wait till the hubbub had subsided.' She would not add, that she wished to see Horace out of his room again before she went.

The party, having said everything that could be thought, felt, invented, or conjectured on the late accident, dispersed — Lady St. Helens to her boudoir, the gentlemen to their shooting, Anne to her brother in anxious expectation of Arnold's opinion of him this morning, and Beatrice was constrained to remain with Lady Rhoda. Let us just look in at the Heronry.

Judith had sought the hut of Colin long before her father looked for her to make his breakfast. She was rewarded by finding the child placidly sleeping. On her return, Maxwell's first greeting was: 'I sent up to the Castle. Mr. Lindsay had passed a good night; but Arnold has not called yet.'

Judith's cheeks were glowing; she attributed this fact to her early walk — her father to his words. After breakfast, she said:

'I must go down to Miss Evelyn, and tell her the truth of all this, which will have reached her in some exaggerated form.'

She set out, as if in haste; yet after she had left

her home behind her, she took the longest way to the cottage, and paused at every point of it. What was the cause of her seeking solitude? What was the subject of her musing? Even that thought which had flashed across her mind when she beheld Horace and Beatrice spring up the crag: 'They love each other!' The longer she meditated, the more entire became her confidence in the revelation of that moment, and the greater her amazement that she had not reached it sooner. But of what import was this conclusion to her, that it should make her step linger, and that, at length, she should sit down on a jutting rock, gazing idly on the waves, and seeming to forget that she had any intention of proceeding further?

'Others will make this discovery ere long,' she said to herself. 'The haughty Countess—Sir Roderic, with his surface of good-nature—Anne, devoted to her brother, enthusiastic on the subject of her friend, —how will each accept this fact? And Mr. Lindsay himself, what will be the result of his fancy for this pretty singing-bird, worthy to be kept in a jewelled case, and let out now and then to warble till all listeners are enchanted? Will such an attachment as this make him what I have thought that he might become—what this fair domain requires that he should be, unless its very fairness is a mockery to the misery to be found on it? Let them go back to Italy, and bask in its sun—float in a gondola, singing to each other. Why am I so caustic—nay, so unjust? I know better things of Horace and of Beatrice than these. Am I conceited enough to imagine that, without Judith Maxwell at his right

hand, Horace Lindsay can neither devise nor pursue what is wise and good? He has a noble nature—a truthful heart; he will break asunder the trammels of the world: in seeking this portionless orphan for his bride, he does so.' But Judith sighed.

'Now, I shall insist on knowing, before I rise from this stone, whether that sigh arose solely from a consideration of my father's disappointment, or not? Disappointed he will be. It were mere falsehood to pretend blindness to the visions he has conjured up—the ambitious schemes he has formed for his homely little daughter—assuming the airs of a princess for her—expecting to see all do homage, often on the verge of making her and himself ridiculous. Ah! how I have smarted sometimes!—

'And I—have I been foolish enough to enter the Castle he has built—to look out of the window, and picture Horace sighing beneath it, lute in hand of course? If I have been dreaming, I dream no longer. Dreaming by daylight is not for me. I shall proceed now to Miss Evelyn. I am not at all sure but that she has indulged in some delusions on this subject.'

Judith walked on without faltering. First, she had to tell Miss Evelyn distinctly, consecutively, all that had happened; and she was heard with breathless interest.

'Thank God that all are safe—all precious, all noble ones!' was Miss Evelyn's ejaculation.

'Thank God, indeed!' repeated Judith, earnestly.

'And now,' she added, smiling, 'don't you see plainly how this reveals that Horace Lindsay and Beatrice Courtenay—'

'Ah!' said Miss Evelyn, with a sigh, as Judith made perhaps an involuntary pause; 'it was sure to end thus—she is so beautiful and loveable. Yet I could wish it otherwise. I doubt if she will ever be so perfectly well suited to the position his wife ought to hold as some women might be. It was very imprudent of his aunt to expose him to this danger. You see, my dear, there was all that period in Switzerland before he ever came here—'

'Almost a fortnight, I believe,' replied Judith, in a careless tone, fully aware that there was passing in Miss Evelyn's mind a thought that, had he seen her first, even Beatrice might not have been a successful rival. She took leave. Miss Evelyn mused over what she had heard, and hoped Judith's composure was unaffected. She could not help feeling a little discomfort herself, and not quite so kindly to Beatrice as usual. Then came back the memory of the girl's gentle, reverent bearing towards herself — of her simple relation of the occurrences of the evening of her brilliant triumph, and her ready repetition of her sweetest songs for her satisfaction. She acknowledged that

'Airs of heaven played round her tongue,'

and forgave her freely, and Horace almost.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Ses caresses font peur.—Boileau.

ALONE in the room with Beatrice, Lady Rhoda said, in her abrupt, dry manner:

'Do you intend to come to see me, Miss Courtenay, when you reside in London?'

Beatrice started, hardly sensible of Lady Rhoda's presence until she addressed her. Moreover, she had never given a thought to the subject on which the question was put. After a moment's reflection, she answered, with a smile:

'I could not intend that, Lady Rhoda, until you had invited me.'

'I do invite you.'

'Thank you,' said Beatrice, timidly; and before she could say more, Lady Rhoda proceeded:

'And I wish you to come, though I don't imagine that you have any great inclination to do so. I may be of use to you at some time, in some way.'

'How very kind of you!'—began Beatrice, gratefully; but Lady Rhoda checked the effusion:

'I like you, Miss Courtenay: I have seen enough of you now to decide that point. I wish to serve you. Perhaps, if you did not please me, I might

wish that. The fact is, however, that I do like you, and I do not like your position. How much of my frankness can you bear?'

'As much as you please,' replied Beatrice; but immediately afterwards a shade of uneasiness passed over her face.

'Words no sooner spoken than repented of,' said Lady Rhoda.

'No,' said Beatrice, 'not so. I feel your kindness; I think I could bear your frankness, as far as I only am concerned.'

'Why did your face change?—what a face it is!'

'I feared lest you might choose to speak of some who befriend me in terms I should not like to hear,' said Beatrice, looking down.

'Well, I respect your fear; I will be as sparing as I can. Anything more?'

Beatrice seemed doubting still.

'What!' cried Lady Rhoda, with impatience, 'will only Lady St. Helens' sugar-plums do for the child? They are not wholesome, her flatteries and Anne's caresses; you need something besides.'

'Miss Lindsay is so true!' exclaimed Beatrice, whose colour had heightened at the name of Anne.

'She is an honest-hearted girl; not in all things the best of friends for you. But enough of this. If I were to talk in this strain to Judith Maxwell, it would delight her; but I have not the least idea of so doing. I should feel that I was merely affording her amusement, and that she was trying to make me out. She is a keen, clever girl; she can take care of herself: but you—'

'Ah!' said Beatrice, looking up, 'that is rather

what I fear. Perhaps you would expect from me more submission than you would find. I know this sounds very presumptuous—conceited—ungrateful even. I can't explain exactly what I mean—I should not like to disappoint you.'

'I will explain your meaning for you. It is, that, with all your pretty, gentle ways, you would not like to be directed—or, at least, not by me. Well, this is honest, and not altogether discouraging; though, perhaps, you wish me to consider it so. I have always found that those who solicit advice, and affect to need guidance and invite correction, are those who least avail themselves of either of the three. Moreover, when I have taken a fancy to any one, I am not easily shaken off. I *will* serve you, not absolutely against your consent, but as far as you will allow me. Don't be frightened; and, above all, be as honest with yourself as you have been with me. If my advice prove unpalatable, take care that you do not reject it because you weakly prefer something pleasanter, and fancy the while that you resent my interference only because you wish to maintain a becoming independence.'

'I will be on my guard against such a mistake,' said Beatrice; and she sighed, as if conscious that danger existed.

'I don't want to talk any more now. Will you breakfast with me in my room to-morrow, before I start? I shall see no one else after leave-taking to-night. Anne has plenty to do, and I shall be too early for the others.'

Beatrice accepted the invitation, and, as Lady Rhoda began to write, not unwillingly left the room.

Presently Lady Rhoda looked round, and perceived she was gone.

'Not sorry to make her escape,' she thought, and looked down again on her paper; then suspending her writing after accomplishing two or three lines, she continued: 'She is a nice creature, in spite of them all—worth caring for. To think of my taking to another of the Countess's protégées! And people call me prejudiced—few have so little bigotry as I have. Poor child! a singular story—none to take care of her but two old men; how should they know what to do?'

Lady Rhoda wrote on vigorously; an hour at least had elapsed when she closed her desk, locked it with a decided touch, and left the room.

Now, when Beatrice, on quitting Lady Rhoda, mounted the staircase, she had passed the door of a room which opened on the garden, and had heard the voices of Horace and Anne within. Her own name was pronounced, and Anne, coming forward, had begged her to enter.

'You have been a good girl with Lady Rhoda for the last half-hour. Now come to us. Poor Horace can't move, and we ought to do all we can to amuse him. Only we must not have a scene,' she added, in a low voice: 'don't speak of yesterday—it is too agitating.'

But when Beatrice entered, Horace was not to be altogether restrained; he extended his hand eagerly, and clasping hers, exclaimed:

'It is through you that I am here! Anne knows it, Anne feels it; and I—'

'Pray, pray do not let us speak of this—at least,

not now,' replied Beatrice, with emotion; 'I promised her I would not.' Then, in obedience to Anne's injunctions, as quickly as she could she returned to the safe subject of Lady Rhoda.

'I don't dislike being with Lady Rhoda, I assure you. She can be very amusing, and, moreover, very kind. She has asked me to come to see her in London.'

'Oh, she is extremely good,' replied Anne; 'and kind she can be when she takes a liking, I know. But, I can scarcely tell why, I cannot get on with her—cannot shake off constraint. There is a certain tone in her voice, a certain glance in her eye, which render me uncomfortable when I hear or see them. She is fond of making herself feared. She must be content, therefore, to be less loved.'

'I think she would like to be loved, too,' said Beatrice.

'Now, Miss Evelyn,' continued Anne, 'is quite as clever, quite as clear-sighted; but she does not make me or any one else afraid of her. That I am ignorant and dull, compared to her cultivation and intelligence, I know very well; but the knowledge only makes me admire and love her the more for being so kind to me.'

'I am sure Lady Rhoda likes her,' interrupted Beatrice.

'But she cannot be like her,' persisted Anne.

'Miss Courtenay,' cried Horace, 'I will take up the defence of your friend Lady Rhoda. I esteem her. She is thoroughly honest; and very often when she is most rough and hard, it is to conceal a tenderness of which she is ashamed. She has the

same horror of emotion, of a scene, which most men have. She dreads and disapproves of all excitement which does not immediately lead to action; perhaps she is right, or very nearly so. Here we have seen her to the greatest possible disadvantage, for she thinks it her duty to be the antagonist at every point of my most effervescent aunt.'

'It is a curious thing,' said Anne, 'to see her affection bestowed on one of whom that aunt makes an idol. It really does speak much for her candour that she can allow you to possess any charms, and I will love her a little since she loves you.'

Then followed lighter and pleasanter talk than the caustic Lady Rhoda could give rise to. Anne and Beatrice went to the garden in search of flowers. Flowers led their thoughts to Florence, and many a pleasant memory did they dwell on, when they returned to Horace laden with their spoil. They spoke of Oreste—the good-natured, droll Oreste, and of the pictures he loved so dearly, the offspring of his own fancy.

'Do you remember his Seasons, his Primavera, his Spring? Now sit still, Beatrice; in a moment I will make you the very picture. Only let me unfasten your hair, and put these few flowers round your head.'

As Anne spoke, she let down her friend's luxuriant tresses, which fell around her to the ground, and held over her head a wreath of starry jessamine which she had been twining. It was a pretty picture that which the two girls presented, and Horace lay gazing on it with admiring eyes; Beatrice raised not hers as long as she felt only his

gaze resting on her, and the rich glow of crimson mounted from cheek to brow. Suddenly she looked up, moved by some impulse of which she knew not the spring, and beheld Lady Rhoda standing in the doorway, her keen glance piercing her as it were, a mixture of displeasure and of contemptuous pity on her countenance.

Lady Rhoda, after a moment's silence, turned to Horace: 'I see you have plenty of entertainment. You don't want me; I shall but spoil your pastime.'

She left them; all three were silent. There was a flush of something like anger on Horace's brow.

Anne was the first to speak.

'Dear me!' she said, 'Lady Rhoda does not understand that we were making a *tableau*. To her we appear very foolish.'

She dropped the wreath, which she had held suspended, as if her hands were paralysed by Lady Rhoda's look, on Beatrice's head. But Beatrice laid aside the flowers, and murmured in a timid voice:

'I am afraid we did appear very foolish.'

Gathering up her hair, and coiling it round her head like a rope as fast as she could, she retreated.

'Poor Beatrice!' said Anne, seating herself on the foot of her brother's couch. 'Lady Rhoda has fairly frightened her. She is rather awful. I could not resist the inclination to show how long and thick her hair is. I never saw any like it.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Lae. For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion . . .
Forward, not permanent; sweet, not lasting:
The perfume and suppliance of a minute.
Oph. No more!

HAMLET.

'DON'T forget your engagement,' said Lady Rhoda to Beatrice, as she wished her good-night.

'I will not,' replied Beatrice; who if not thus reminded, would certainly not have ventured to remember it. When morning came, and she found herself at Lady Rhoda's door, she paused for a moment, and then knocked timidly. She was obliged to repeat the knock before she was heard; then the door was thrown open by Lady Rhoda herself.

'Come in, child, though such a knock as that scarcely seems like wishing it. The breakfast is in the inner room. Go to it. I have not quite packed this box.'

'May I help you?' cried Beatrice, feeling that to do so would be a great relief.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

come at once; then it will be over, and we can part as good friends as a dentist and his patient. It is a very injurious thing for you to stay here for Horace Lindsay to make love to you in a manner which means nothing, and never can mean anything.'

Beatrice started with indignation. When she could at all recover herself, she exclaimed:

'Oh! Lady Rhoda, did you bring me here for this?'

'I did,' said Lady Rhoda, more softly, and laying her hand on Beatrice's arm. 'Bear with me a while. I am certain of what I say. He is not in a position to mean anything, be his admiration of you ever so sincere, and it cannot be otherwise. It would be miserable madness for him to think of marrying without money. Idly, expensively as he has been brought up, his uncle will leave him probably little but debts, and his aunt's property is not at her own disposal. He is very handsome, agreeable, and well-born. What better or easier proof of her partiality can Lady St. Helens give than the providing an heiress for his bride? Depend upon it, when he has gone a little further—when he begins to think your feelings interested, and expostulations pour thick upon him,—he will take these things into consideration, and you will be sacrificed. I know people of fashion much too well to doubt this for a moment. Or even were Horace too young and too much in love to listen to these suggestions of reason—were he to become your husband, a very few months, not years, would suffice to convince you both how utterly you had mistaken your happiness.'

Beatrice, while Lady Rhoda spoke, had gradually withdrawn her face and her hands, so that her burning blushes and tearful eyes were hidden. She now raised her head.

'The friends around me are not so miserably false—so wicked—as you would have me believe. I reject the imputation. For Mr. Lindsay, I will only say I have heard nothing from his lips that entitles me to discuss such questions as these. I cannot—I will not.'

'Miss Courtenay, my words of warning will abide with you—that is enough. If you wish to make yourself or Horace Lindsay very unhappy, you may try to put them out of mind: but if you will weigh them fairly and act on them, you will quit this place and pursue with sincerity and energy the purpose which brought you to England.'

'It was in pursuit of it that I came here.'

'Lady St. Helens has amused you long enough with her speeches—made you her plaything long enough. Put her to the proof; and if she disappoints you, come to your own home, and seek me.'

Beatrice felt as if she could not seek her. She rose, and appeared waiting to hear if Lady Rhoda desired to speak further.

'Beatrice, I will not deal with you by half measures; what I have said does not appear to suffice.'

'You are mistaken,' answered Beatrice. 'It is quite enough. You have set before me Mr. Lindsay's loss of friends and of happiness. I do not know that either are at stake, but I will never voluntarily endanger them.'

'But, my dear child, I am not certain that he

deserves consideration on your part. I cannot prove what I say, yet I will tell you that there have been times when I have doubted whether he is wholly free from some other engagement, which does meet the approbation of his uncle.'

Beatrice struggled hard for composure; her hand, which leaned on the sofa, closed tightly.

'Intimate as his sister is with me, Lady Rhoda, you may expect me to be able to solve these doubts; but her intimacy does not extend to the communication of the secrets of her brother, if secrets he has.'

'I have no more to say. Out of regard to him, if he be sincere—out of respect to yourself, if he be trifling—I warn you to quit Duror. Forgive me the pain I have caused you. Appreciate my motives. Believe in my affection.'

This was much for Lady Rhoda to say; she drew Beatrice towards her to kiss her, and the girl was rather like a statue that cannot repel, than a living being to comply or to resent. Lady Rhoda took no offence at her conduct, and let her depart in silence as she released her from her embrace.

In the hall she met Annunziata, and shaking her warmly by the hand, she said:

'You and your young mistress are to come to see me when you arrive in London, remember.'

Annunziata assented willingly, for Lady Rhoda was not without a portion of her favour.

Beatrice hastened to her room; she threw herself on a seat—she felt like a person who had been struck a severe blow, smarting with the pain and the indignity.

[illegible] was right to [illegible]. Nevertheless [illegible] and I [illegible]— [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

simple conviction that she had nothing whatever to do with the proposal, save to decline it, alone took possession of her mind, and she scarcely noticed the sum specified, and made no comparison between it and the one it was her purpose to acquire. She sat down, and wrote a brief but courteous refusal, assigning as her reason for so doing that she did not intend ever to go on the stage; but after she had written this, it occurred to her that although she could not accede to the first proposition, she yet might form some other professional engagement with a person who met her with so much liberality. She began to reflect on the subject: 'Lady St. Helens—she can advise me, better than any one else can; I will consult her before I reply. This hasty note is useless.'

Beatrice read the manager's letter again with rapidly-varying sensations. The greatness of the sum now struck her: her purpose half accomplished, a second engagement might restore her to her grandfather: his beloved image rose before her—she was again the solace of his life, he again her protector and guide; a home of peace and security open to them; to him tranquillity—to her preservation from indignity, freedom from patronage. The dream was pleasant; but she shook her head, and murmured: 'Not yet to be!' But now all the impassioned sentiments which had inspired her—borne her along on a tide of eloquence on the night of her acting—swept again over heart and brain. She clasped her hands:

'This is my gift!' she exclaimed. 'This is what my nature demands to be—am I to reject it? am I to crush it inward? Is its exercise to be denied

me? I felt then as if it were part of my existence; —now it seems all the happiness left me, the sole scope for the spirit within. Oh! my grandfather! you could not know the weight of the fetters you hung on me—set me free, or I die!'

This was one of those paroxysms of emotion to which Beatrice from her childhood had been subject—rarely yielded to, save in solitude, and therefore by others almost unsuspected.

A gentle knock was heard at her door; Beatrice started up—her head swam! 'Come in,' she said, and Anne entered:

'Dear Beatrice, it is nearly twelve o'clock. I began to wonder at your absence. Moreover, I chanced to go into Lady Rhoda's room, and I saw that but one had breakfasted.'

'I did not eat anything, I remember,' said Beatrice, with a languid smile.

'And now you look ready to faint.' Anne darted from the room to return with a glass of milk and a roll. Beatrice tried to partake of these to reassure her; but Anne still regarded her with surprise, and sitting beside her, at length took her hand, saying:

'This cannot be for Lady Rhoda! What has troubled you?'

'This, for one thing,' replied Beatrice, putting her letter into her friend's hand.

Anne read it with lively interest, and raised her eyes with a look of inquiry.

'There,' said Beatrice, faintly, 'is the reply I wrote without consideration.'

Anne read that also, evidently with satisfaction.

Beatrice, in a constrained voice, continued:

'I have never told you that my grandfather forbade me to go on the stage. Nothing led us to the subject.'

'No; but Mr. Howard did. Still, this is gratifying—encouraging—'

'You think that I have no room for deliberation,' said Beatrice, still maintaining composure.

'None,' answered Anne, without hesitation.

Beatrice's eyes were fixed on her friend's open countenance. 'Who,' she thought, 'dare doubt your rectitude and sincerity?' She threw herself on Anne's neck, and burst into a passionate flood of tears. Anne, almost alarmed at this suddenness and violence of emotion in one remarkable for habitual self-command, strove to soothe her. At length she sobbed:

'Dearest Anne, it seems all so easy, so straightforward to you—you know now how I have been tortured. You cannot understand—you will not feel for me.'

'Oh! yes, I will—only tell me—'

'I can't explain; but it has been a sore temptation—not only the greatness of the sum, even far more the nature of the offer. I cannot tell you all the feelings awakened in me by that one night—beyond any of the same sort that I had ever known before—not unguessed at, but unrealised till then.'

'Ah!' replied Anne, sadly, 'many thought it dangerous for you.'

'Dangerous!' repeated Beatrice; and she longed to ask, 'Was Horace one of these?' 'Dear Anne,' she continued, after a pause, 'I am safe now: I am

right again. Your simple truth has swept away all the delusions which passion was flinging across my sight. You have disenchanted me. Thank you! thank you—'

And if her grief had been like a storm, there was already on her face that sweetness and serenity which in sky and earth succeed the tempest.

'But I shall not send that letter. My castle has fallen in ruins around me, yet I think I may build a little cottage with the fragments. I am going to consult the Countess whether I cannot, while I decline this offer, make some other terms with the generous author of it.'

Anne looked as if she had misgivings, but said:

'I suppose she will advise you best on such a subject as this. She has more knowledge than you or I can pretend to—or Horace—or any one here. But I hope you intend to have an opinion of your own?'

'One always does when one asks advice,' returned Beatrice, with a smile, for victory over self had restored her spirits.

'This is not a secret, Beatrice. I may talk of it to my brother.'

'Oh, no!' exclaimed Beatrice, recalling with nervous horror Lady Rhoda's conversation,—'Oh, no—pray do not!'

Anne could not understand the distress of her tone, but promised silence.

END OF VOL. I.

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